Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Latvian Academy of Sport Education

Study field: Health Care

Experts:

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Summary of the Assessment of the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

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AIKA in December 2022 engaged an Expert Group consisting of five members to assess the study field of Health Care and two study programmes held at the Latvian Academy of Sport Education in Riga. These were the professional Bachelors study programme Physiotherapy 42722 and an Academic Masters study programme Health Care specialist in Sport 45722.

The aims of the Health Care study field are clearly defined as well as being in line with the strategic direction of the LASE. LASE has developed multiple Quality Assurance systems however they are difficult to negotiate and most quality criteria and indicators have not been clearly defined. There is limited proof that the data collected from these systems have been acted upon.

Resources for this study field are not optimal and the manner for the distribution of funding should be revised. A new Research Centre that is well equipped has been built however this really covers the needs of the few who carry out research and not for the bulk of the students. The necessary resources for teaching equipment, apparatus, the library, financial support for the staff to attend conferences, or do research are very limited, making this study field existing on a very fine line and unfortunately affecting the standard of education of the students.

The study field has highly qualified staff who are very professional and dedicated to their jobs even though financial and lack of resources were mentioned as factors influencing their work. Management has to distribute work loads more evenly, as some staff are overwhelmed with lectures not releasing them to carry out any research at all.

LASE has increased the number of cooperation agreements both with local and foreign universities, unfortunately these are not reaping the desired effects. The internationalization and cooperation record of LASE still has to reach a useful potential whereby there can be an exchange of staff and students to improve the quality of the educational product.

The teaching and learning needs an injection of new ideas, the Board is recommending more blended learning, more group work, more interactive learning, more student research as a teaching tool, use of a reflective portfolio and possibly the use of practice based learning as a learning by experience.

The overall impression having reviewed the analysis carried out by the Expert Board is that LASE still has a lot of work to do if it would like to get a fully compliant report from a reviewing board.

To commence with the Bachelors in Physiotherapy still relies on members of staff that are employed by the various sites where clinical practice takes place to carry out the teaching of a large part of the curriculum that include all Electrotherapy, clinical skills and a large part of the practical training to become a competent physiotherapist. This situation results in the Academy not being in a position to quality control what is being taught, the Staff teaching, the students getting taught the same topic but in different sites. This was one of the prime recommendations by the previous expert board but does not appear to have been tackled.

The study programme is antiquated, based on the medical model, with study units of minimal credit value. Again the previous board recommended, not suggested, that study units ought to be amalgamated into modules which complement each other. The easier supporting subjects first, becoming more complicated as the course develops. This spiral curriculum is easier and more interesting for a student to follow and might solve the chronic problem LASE has with early drop outs. The decision to stop the entry for the physiotherapy course in English appears to be very shortsighted and only reflects the poor internationalisation associated with LASE. The Physiotherapy programme unfortunately does not encourage lifelong learning and basically the objectives of the course have to be formulated towards the aims of the course. There are study units that appear to be situated randomly at the very early stages of the course of accountancy or law in the first year. To summarise this course will do well to accept and follow the recommendations put forward by the

Expert Board.
Right from the very start a dilemma was faced by the Expert Group is that presently LASE runs a Professional Masters course titled Health Care specialist in Sport and not that asked by AIKA to be reviewed being the Academic Masters. The Self Assessment Report prepared by the Academy, the Management and Senior Staff all made reference to a merger with Riga Stradins University that together will be offering the Academic Masters. The Study Programme, the facilities, the Staff, the students and Graduates reviewed by the Expert Group still pertain to the Professional Masters, hence the assessment provided by this board is a hotchpotch of the two programmes of study.
All the Staff and the new Research Centre are some of the strengths for this course. The proposed merger with Riga Stradins University and the conversion to an Academic Masters ought to highlight this course. However, the lack of resources as stated previously, especially the Library at Masters level, the teaching and learning methodologies utilised, the lack of modern treatment regimes and equipment, the unjustified inclusion of a clinical/practical component in an academic masters all contribute to a Masters course that till the present is not attracting enough students to justify the large amount of staff present.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1. The aims of the study field Health Care are closely related to the main goal of LASE – "… to provide students with the opportunity to obtain higher academic and higher professional education and training, to develop sports science and research in health care in sports, to develop culture in order to preserve the intellectual and physical potential necessary for the Republic of Latvia promoting and ensuring harmonious development of the nation" (Self-assessment report, henceforth - SAR, p. 15-16). The aims of the study field Health Care are closely related to the LASE interdisciplinary approach to health and sports science, and healthcare in sports.
The development of the study field is based on the aim to educate proficient health care specialists in sports for the needs of Latvia's national economy, as well as attracting students from the European Union and other countries, harmonising the learning outcomes with the corresponding requirements of the European Union, the sports labour market, human and public interests.
Study field Health Care meets the needs and development trends of the society and the national economy, as the study programmes implemented are oriented towards studies that meet the national economy and social needs, developing the provision of sports physiotherapy services in Latvia for people of all ages with different physical abilities, developing the interdisciplinary approach of health and sports science in rehabilitation through physical activities for the development of people with functional disorders, which in turn, ensures the training of competitive specialists in physiotherapy for the Latvian and international labour market, thus strengthening the cooperation with employers, creating competence-based studies that meet the requirements of the labour market.
Within the study field Health Care, the LASE has submitted for expert evaluation two study programmes: professional bachelor's study programme Physiotherapy (PBSP Physiotherapy, 42722), and academic master's study programme Health Care Specialist in Sport (AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport, 45722). However, in the aims of the study field Health Care only professional studies are indicated: "To ensure professional studies in the fields of sports science and health care that meet the needs of the national economy, culture, social and national defence and security, and that are harmonised in the theoretical foundations of sports and health care sciences, and that meet the professional standards, and are applicable in practice" (SAR, p. 15). In SAR it is stated that the

professional master's study programme is offered thus emphasising the interconnection of bachelor's and master's study programmes: "... it is possible to continue studies in the Professional Master's study programme Health Care Specialist in Sport" (SAR, p. 17). But it is the academic master's study programme that has been submitted for expert evaluation.
A more detailed explanation of the transition from the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport to the AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport by LASE would be desirable when defining the first aim of the study field (SAR, p. 15) and describing the connection of the study programmes.
The aim 4 and 5 of the study field are much-welcomed: "... the sustainable development of the sports industry and health care in sports by developing the provision of sports physiotherapy services for persons of all ages with different physical abilities in Latvia; To evolve the LASE interdisciplinary approach of health and sports science in rehabilitation through the development of physical activities for people with functional disorders. Adapted physical activities include sports education, sports, recreation and rehabilitation for people of all ages with disabilities ..." (SAR, p. 15), which directly demonstrates the LASE's contribution to the development of physiotherapy in Latvia.

The aim of the LASE study field Health Care is clearly defined, achievable and in line with the strategic direction of the LASE – to provide students with an opportunity to obtain higher academic and higher professional education and training, to develop sports science and research in health care in sports for both professional programmes – the PBSP Physiotherapy (42722) and the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (47722). But the LASE has submitted for the experts' evaluation the PBSP Physiotherapy (42772) and the AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (45772). Therefore, a more detailed explanation of the transition from the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (47722) to the AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (45772) by LASE is desirable when defining the first aim of the study field and describing the connection of the study programmes.

1.1.2. SAR (p. 18 – 22) provides an opportunity to get acquainted with the SWOT analysis of the study field Health Care (the reporting period 2017/2018 until the academic year 2020/2021), which indicates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the study field. In order to reduce the influence of weaknesses on the development of the field, certain measures have been developed and are being implemented (to develop and improve the Bachelor's and Master's study programmes in the study field Health Care; cooperation with Latvian and Baltic HEIs, to develop an international Doctoral study programme in Health Care in Physiotherapy and Adapted Physical Education; to develop new first level professional higher education study programmes in health care; to establish a department for professional growth and qualification development of health care specialists). During the visit, the management of the LASE informed the experts that in 2026 it is planned to integrate the LASE into the structure of RSU; taking this into account, there is a reason to think that in cooperation with RSU, the LASE can create new study programmes related to physiotherapy within the direction of Health Care.

SWOT analysis of the LASE study field Health Care indicates 32 strengths of the study field, some of them being the weak points in the experts' opinion, for instance:
● A strength in the LASE report. "Material and technical provision available in the LSPA study direction "Health Care" complies with the requirements of the regulatory enactments regulating the professional qualifications of the study programmes involved in the "Health Care" direction" (SAR, p. 20). Weak point in the experts' opinion. "The lack of resources in all fields has been noted. The LASE is in great need of additional financial resources to be able to excel in its field, because now it mostly seems to be fighting to provide basic functions".
● A strength in the LASE report. "Participation of students and lecturers of the "Health Care" direction in the ERASMUS+ mobility programme in partner higher education institutions, with which

cooperation agreements have been concluded''. The weak point pointed out by the experts. “The agreements have not attracted an appreciable number of either outgoing or incoming students to the LASE using the Erasmus+ programme.”
● A strength in the LASE report. “The collection of the LASE Library is created in accordance with the directions of the LASE “Health Care” study and scientific work, as well as the requirements of study programmes of the “Health Care” direction”. A weak point indicated by the experts”. “Library resources are outdated and in insufficient quantity and quality. There is a noticeable lack of modern books and journals in the library”.

The Opportunities and Threats indicated in the SWOT analysis of the LASE study field Health Care SAR (SAR, p. 21 – 22) are acceptable.
The development plan of the LASE strategic development direction “Development of the study process and study environment” also included the development plan of the study direction “Health Care” (LASE_Strategy_2015_2020.pdf (lspa.lv), p. 21 - 28). This document states that: “In accordance with the specific support objective 8.1.1. "To increase the number of study programmes of modernized STEM, including medicine and creative industries” set in the Cabinet Regulation No. 561 of August 16, 2016, LASE will implement this objective in health care as the thematic area of education and modernize the Professional Bachelor study programme „Physiotherapy” with qualification „Physiotherapist” (code 42722) and the Professional Master study programme „Health Care Specialist in Sport” (code 47722) with professional qualifications „Sport physiotherapist” and „Adapted physical activity specialist in rehabilitation” (LASE_Strategy_2015_2020.pdf (lspa.lv), p. 21). The academic master's study program is not mentioned in the development plan.
The development plan for the study field Health Care for the next six years is not provided. The LASE has presented only an appendix – Planning of the Development process (Appendix_2.1.2_1.Planning of the Development process.docx), but the development plan for the study field itself is not provided.

1.1.3.The study process is organised in accordance with the Constitution of the Latvian Academy of Sport Education, the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia and normative documents in force in the Republic of Latvia, as well as in accordance with the LASE Senate documents regulating studies (SAR, p. 26).
In compliance with the “Regulations on the Management of a Study Direction at LASE”, the implementation of the study programmes is ensured by the Study Direction Council, the Director of the study programme, qualification supervisors, specialisation supervisors, profiling departments and divisions, the academic staff of the study programme, the staff of the departments/divisions/laboratories and support staff. The study process of the PBSP Physiotherapy and the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport was organised and managed by the Department of Physiotherapy and the Department of Sports Medicine, Physiotherapy, Therapeutic Gymnastics and Massage in cooperation with the Department of Studies.
The main responsibilities of the Head of the study field are: to plan, manage, organise and control the work of the Study Field Council; to plan and manage the operational strategy in the LASE study direction and to ensure its implementation; to propose draft documents regulating the study process of the LASE study field in accordance with the Latvian state and international standards, and to prepare them for discussion at the LASE Study Council and the LASE Senate (“NOLIKUMS PAR STUDIJU VIRZIENA VADĪBAS KĀRTĪBU LSPA”).
The Head of the study direction cooperates with: directors of study programmes, qualification supervisors, professional associations in Latvia and abroad, higher education institutions in Latvia and abroad, as well as other institutions related to the field, and LASE administration (SAR, p. 28).
The competence of the Director of a study programme is: in cooperation with the Study Direction Council, to develop and prepare a study programme for licensing, accreditation, to perform self-

evaluation of the programme; to be responsible for the compliance of the study programme with the level of development of the industry and the requirements of the labour market; to be responsible for the quality of the study programme implementation and to implement the strategic control of the programme; to organise surveys of students, graduates and employers, to analyse the results of the surveys and to organise the elimination of the revealed shortcomings ("NOLIKUMS PAR STUDIJU VIRZIENA VADĪBAS KĀRTĪBU LSPA " https://lspa.lv/files/2016/Studiju_virzienu_vadiba_2016.pdf).
The academic staff of the study field, the programmes, the profiling departments and the division are responsible for the quality and evaluation of the study courses. The administrative and technical staff of LASE within the study direction provides support in all management processes of the study direction (SAR, p. 29).
In SAR section 2.1.3. The Internal Quality Assurance Centre is mentioned; it is indicated also in Appendix "1_1_Structure_EN". But unfortunately, its function in the quality assurance of the study programmes is not described in SAR.
Appendix "1_1_Structure_EN" states that in the LASE there is a Students' Council. In SAR Section 2.1.3. (SAR, p. 27) it is stated that "The Study Direction Council consists of at least 5 members, including ... the representatives of the student councils as observers". However, SAR (SAR, does not provide the description of whether students can take part in taking certain decisions that affect the quality of study programmes and if it is merely the observers' status that they have in the Study Direction Council. But it is specified in SAR 2.1.2. (SAR, p. 20): "Involvement of LASE "Health Care" study direction students in improving the quality of studies, providing feedback at the LASE Study Direction Council in Health Care established in 2016, which includes student representatives from each academic year ".
During the visit, the experts were able to make sure that the structure of the management processes within the study field and the study programmes correspond to the information mentioned in the SAR (SAR, p. 22 – 26), and that the management of the study field is effective and facilitates achieving good results.

1.1.4. Enrolment at the PBSP Physiotherapy takes place in accordance with the LASE admission regulations, which are approved by the LASE Senate (https://www.lspa.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=267&Itemid=191). Each study programme implemented at the LASE has its own separate Admission Regulations. The website also contains the admission regulations for the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport, but in the SAR Section 2.1.4. only the admission conditions for the PBSP Physiotherapy are described, but nothing is mentioned concerning the master's programme. Requirements of enrolment are logical and based in the Law on Higher Education and other regulatory documents and as they are available online, they are available to be viewed by any interested partie.
The LASE also provides the opportunity to begin studies in later stages in accordance with the procedure for starting studies at the LASE "Regulations on the Recognition of Competencies Acquired in Professional Experience or Study Results Achieved in Previous Education at LASE" (https://lspa.lv/files/2019/Iepriekseja s_izgl._un_pieredzes_atzisana_2019.pdf).
The evaluation of study results in the recognition of study results obtained during the "ERASMUS+" programme is regulated by the "Regulations on the ERASMUS Mobility Student Scholarship Competition" (https://lspa.lv/files/2017/Erasmus_stipendijas_2017.pdf).

1.1.5. The system of evaluating student achievements and study results is defined in external regulatory enactments: the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the General Education Law, as well as in several internal regulatory enactments of the LASE. Six of them are applicable to all study programmes implemented by the LASE (Regulations on LASE Study Procedure; Remote Study Procedure; Procedure for Development, Updating and Application of Study Course Descriptions at LASE; Regulations on the Basic Principles and Procedures for the Evaluation of LASE Study

Programme Acquisition; Regulations on the Procedure for Organizing Students' Independent Work; Regulations on Final and State Examinations), two regulations are made specifically for the PBSP Physiotherapy (Regulations on Final Examinations in the PBSP Physiotherapy; Regulations on the Professional Qualification Practice of the PBSP Physiotherapy), and three regulations are binding upon the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (Regulations on Final Examinations in the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport; Regulations on the Practice of the Study Specialization Direction Adapted Physical Activity Specialist in Rehabilitation of the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport; Regulations on the Practice of the Study Specialization Direction Sport Physiotherapist of the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport).
The organisation of study course examinations and the assessment of students' achievements are carried out in accordance with the "Regulations on the Basic Principles and Procedures for the Evaluation of LASE Study Programme Acquisition", which is applicable to the assessment of the learning outcomes of full-time and part-time students registered in the LASE study programmes of all levels.
Various assessment methods are used to evaluate study results. The main criteria for the selection of assessment methods are: to ensure an objective assessment of the achieved study results. The achievement evaluation standards and requirements for students of the LASE study field Health Care are available in the study course descriptions. Furthermore, in the first lecture of the study course, the tutor informs the students about the evaluation criteria and conditions of the study course, as well as the binding procedures (SAR, p. 32).
When evaluating study results in a study module or study course on a 10-point scale, the LASE can also envisage additional criteria for determining a specific assessment on a 10-point scale. Ratings from "outstanding" (10) to "almost average" (4) and "passed" are considered successful. The programmes end with state examinations, which include the development and defence of bachelor's or master's theses, which are evaluated by the state examination commission and are regulated by the relevant regulations: Regulations on Final Examinations in the Professional Bachelor's Higher Education Programme "Physiotherapy" (42722) and Regulations on Final Examinations in the Professional Master's Higher Education Programmes "Health Care Specialist in Sport" (47722).
The teaching staff must take into account the study results to be achieved by the study programmes, and when defining the learning outcomes to be achieved by the students in a study course, it is necessary to ensure that they contribute to the achievement of the study programme results. The teaching staff cooperates in the development of learning outcomes, content, description of independent work assignments and assessment criteria. The director of the study programme checks the compliance of the learning outcomes of the study courses with the study results of the study programme by carrying out their mapping.
In the LASE as a whole and in the study field Health Care in particular, the methods, principles and procedures for the assessment of student achievements have been developed and clearly defined.

1.1.6. There are Regulations on Academic Integrity developed and approved at the LASE (https://lspa.lv/files/senate/decisions/2021/02/Akademiskais_godigums_2021.04.02.docx).
The LASE academic staff, general staff and students observe the principles of academic integrity and ethics and are equally responsible for both the observance of the principles of academic integrity and the consequences of their violation. The involved parties are informed about the observance of the principles of academic integrity in informative meetings for lecturers, while students are informed by lecturers when beginning specific study courses, by explaining the requirements for the assessment of learning outcomes. The lecturer may issue a verbal reprimand or a written report to the student for a violation of academic integrity in accordance with the procedure for reviewing the violation of the student academic integrity. If suspicion of plagiarism has arisen during the investigation of the coincidences of the text in the LASE computerized plagiarism control system (in the LASE student information system – LSPA IS (http://is.lspa.lv), further investigation of the

student's work is organized in accordance with the Investigation Procedure of the Electronic Versions of Final Papers (SAR, p. 35).

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
The aim of the LASE study field Health Care is clearly defined, achievable and in line with the strategic direction of the LASE – to provide students with an opportunity to obtain higher academic and higher professional education and training, to develop sports science and research in health care in sports for both professional programmes – the PBSP Physiotherapy (42722) and the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (47722). But the LASE has submitted for the experts' evaluation the PBSP Physiotherapy (42772) and the AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (45772). Therefore, a more detailed explanation of the transition from the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (47722) to the AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (45772) by LASE is desirable when defining the first aim of the study field and describing the connection of the study programmes.
The development plan of the LASE strategic development direction "Development of the study process and study environment" also included the development plan of the study direction "Health Care" (SAR, p. 24) (DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY for 2015–2020. Section 1. Development of the study process and study environment. This document includes the development plan for both study and research directions of the LASE together: sport science and health care in sport. The development plan for the study field Health Care for the next six year is not provided. The LASE has presented only an appendix – Planning of the Development process (Appendix_2.1.2_1.Planning of the Development process.docx).
The study process is organised in accordance with the Constitution of the Latvian Academy of Sport Education, the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia and normative documents in force in the Republic of Latvia, as well as in accordance with the LASE Senate documents regulating studies. The SAR does not provide the description of the function of the Internal Quality Assurance Centre in the quality assurance of study programmes. Enrolment at the PBSP Physiotherapy takes place in accordance with the LASE admission regulations, which are approved by the LASE Senate and they are harmonised with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory documents. Every study programme implemented at the LASE has its own separate Admission Regulations.
In the LASE as a whole and in the study field Health Care, the methods, principles and procedures for the assessment of student achievements have been developed and clearly defined.
The LASE academic staff, general staff and students adhere to the principles of academic integrity and ethics and are equally responsible for both the observance of the principles of academic integrity and the consequences of their violation.

Strengths:
1.The study process is organised in accordance with the Constitution of the Latvian Academy of Sport Education, the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia and normative documents in force in the Republic of Latvia, as well as in accordance with the LASE Senate documents regulating studies.
2. In the LASE as a whole and in the study field Health Care, the methods, principles and procedures for the assessment of student achievements have been developed and clearly defined.

Weaknesses:
1. No detailed explanation of the transition from PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport to AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport has been provided.
2.A development plan for the study field Health Care for the next six years has not been developed

(the appendix contains only the planning of the plan).

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1. The LASE, according to the Self assessment report (Section 2.2., page 36) has established an Internal quality assurance system (from now on IQAS). Description of this IQAS is publicly available - published in LASE web page under the title “LASE Quality handbook” (Latvijas Sporta pedagoģijas akadēmijas Kvalitātes rokasgrāmata) (https://lspa.lv/files/2022/LSPA_KVALITĀTES_ROKASGRĀMATA_03112022.pdf). The LASE Quality handbook contains a general description of the IQAS, the main documents on which the system is based, and the risk management policy. Detailed quality criteria and indicators are not publicly available. The detailed description of all components of the IQAS has not been provided to the Expert Group. According to the Self assessment report: “The internal quality control and management of the “Health Care” study direction is based on the model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and the principles and criteria of the Deming cycle Plan- Do- Check-Act: the management and strategy of the “Health Care” study direction, human (academic personnel, student) management, resource management, study and research management, student satisfaction, employer satisfaction, impact on society.” The Expert Group has found evidence of this principle being included in the “Internal Control system regulation”, page 2 (Iekšējās kontroles sistēmas nolikums). According to the report, the main sources for data input in this system are feedback surveys of students, graduates, employers and study tests and exam results of students, as well as research of external standards and regulatory enactments (Self assessment report, page 37). Evaluation of academic staff is based on package of documents “Documents in it are selected based on 10 criteria: scientific biography; during the last 5 years: published works, presentations at conferences, participation in exhibitions, scientific work, supervised Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral Thesis developed and defended under the guidance of the tutor, results of the student survey on the tutor’s work; administrative duties at LASE and outside it in other types of scientific, educational, journalistic, creative activities.” (Self assessment report, page 37).
The survey examples provided by LASE gives a reason to expect some valuable information from employers to be collected regarding necessary development of the study programmes. A survey targeted to graduates asks questions that mostly give unspecific answers - the possible need for changes could be inferred from these data but they are overshadowed by risk of bias related to interpretation and speculation. At the same time during the interviews with the graduates it was not clear whether any of them had ever received an invitation to participate in these surveys.
According to Self assessment report, there are many directions and tasks for IQAS:
1. The study direction internal quality control and management is directed at: “the management and strategy of the “Health Care” study direction, human (academic personnel, student) management, resource management, study and research management, student satisfaction, employer satisfaction, impact on society” (Self assessment report, page 36).
2. The quality assurance policy of LASE is directed at “the quality of education, the efficiency of management in the society of the academy” (Self assessment report, page 37).
3. “The quality of education consists of 3 areas: study process, research, creativity and innovation” (Self assessment report, page 37).
4. “The main strategic direction of LASE Internal quality assurance - ensuring excellence and sustainability, continuous improvement and control” (Self assessment report, page 37).
5. “Quality management was provided at 2 levels: LASE and the Department of Physiotherapy” (Self assessment report, page 37).

6. “In ensuring quality management, the following are distinguished: evaluation of the quality of tutors and evaluation of study subject programmes” (Self assessment report, page 37).
The LASE Quality handbook simultaneously consists of the LASE Quality system, study quality assurance, process management and internal control (that consists of internal control system, risk management and internal audit). No specific description of the relationship between all these parts are provided, neither schematically, nor textually.
After requesting additional information about IQAS, the Expert Group received several documents in Latvian:
● Internal control system regulation (Iekšējās kontroles sistēmas nolikums)
● Development plan for Internal control system (Iekšējās kontroles sistēmas pilnveides plāns)
● Corruption prevention plan (Korupcijas novēršanas plāns)
● Risk management policy (Risku vadības politika)
● Risk management regulation (Risku vadības nolikums).
According to these documents, LASE has established a clear policy of quality control of higher education institution and risk management, the responsibilities and actions are determined. The Internal control system analysis and development plan has distinguished problematic issues, their resolution criteria, timeline and responsible actors. While this document is not an example of perfect quality assurance strategy, it is one of the best provided by the LASE. For a quality assurance system/programme to work effectively, it has to identify data to be collected and analysed routinely (not by possible demand), it has to set measurable objectives to be reached (quality criteria) and it has to set clear quality indicators that would allow to measure the success. The quality assurance system should be targeted in different directions - both on the quality of the process (how is the institution running) and the quality of the product (how good is the education provided). In comparison the Internal quality assurance system development plan for 2021 https://www.lspa.lv/files/senate/decisions/2021/01/2021.g.PLANS_KVALITATES_NODROSINASANAS_SISTEMAS.pdf) and 2022 (Document “2022.g. Plāns Kvalitātes Nodrošināšanai”, downloadeble at LASE web page) are a list of tasks and responsible actors without clear and specific criteria and indicators for achievement.
It is the opinion of the Experts Group that the Internal quality assurance system of LASE is complicated, hard to follow, in many ways - vague. Development Strategy of the Latvian Academy of Sport Education 2015 – 2020” (https://www.lspa.lv/files/documents/2015/LSPA_Strategija_2015_2020.pdf) has set a number of tasks/objectives in each of the LASE development strategic directions. These tasks/objectives have predetermined outcomes and the responsible sides are identified.
For example, regarding scientific activity there is a task: “Strengthen close cooperation with sports federations, municipalities and economic sectors in order to create innovations and high added value products and technologies and effectively coordinate the development of the science and sport education industry and health care in sport.” A question appears: are these tasks/objectives an actual quality criteria? It is the Expert Group’s opinion that this is not the best way to run an Internal Quality Assurance system.
While there could be long term quality criteria, it is unwise to have only those types. It is too large of a risk to miss crucial actions if the process is not being monitored on at least a yearly basis. The stark example of this situation is task/objective “Switch to the ECTS credit system, ensuring the level of independent work by students meeting the requirements of ECTS and improving the communicative skills of students” .” A question appears: Have LASE switched to ECTS?
The evidence of failure to reach these objectives are clear signs of inefficiency of IQAS. Some amount of responsibility lies directly in the definitions of the quality criteria.
Another issue noted is the wording of these tasks/objectives. While the version presented in the development plan fits perfectly with the concept of the task/objective, it is too abstract to be recognised as a proper quality criteria. For example, regarding study process, there is a task:

“Promote the internationalisation process of LSPA studies and improve its coordination;”
First of all, the quality criteria should never contain more than one focus (in this example, there are two - to promote and to coordinate). Probably even more important - the wording should be used to express an unmistakable outcome. In this case, if the objective of this criteria was to ensure that international cooperation grants development of the Academy staffs scientific and educational competencies, that could be measured as successfully executed staff exchange and other projects, the quality criteria should have been stated in similar ways to this: The existing international cooperation agreements grants regular and productive cooperation between universities in the form of staff exchange and mutual projects.
OR
The new cooperation agreements match the Development strategy of LASE regarding the scientific level and direction as well as teaching quality of the partner university.
Expert Group opinion that “The Internal quality assurance system of LASE [..] lacks clearly defined quality criteria and indicators for all relevant dimensions”, is based on examples like those:
“Improve and enhance the economic management and infrastructure management of the LASE by assessing its operational effectiveness.”
This objective has no predetermined indicators, it contains many assessment focuses, it contains undefined means of actions - the reader has no clue what it means to “assess its operational effectiveness” and how to assess operational effectiveness? What are the risks related to these types of criteria?
The question the LASE administration ought to ask - is it enough for quality criteria to contain only superficial statements?
The Lase has established particular department to deal with quality issues - Internal quality centre (Iekšējās kvalitātes centrs) (https://lspa.lv/files/2022/LSPA_struktura_LV_11.11.2022_JN.jpg). The functions of this department are not well described and publicly available (the functions of this department are mentioned in various regulations). Due to all aforementioned peculiarities it takes an unnecessary large amount of effort for all employees of LASE just to keep up with quality requirements and to understand the importance of these requirements. This system should be much more accessible.
Due to all these facts the Expert Group lacks confidence that the IQAS of LASE contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes, that it ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

1.2.2. The procedures for development and review of the study programme has been established (“Regulations on Development and Approval of Study Programmes”). It is essential to notice that the Expert Group, contrary to what is said in the Self evaluation report (page 38), could not access the regulation approved at the LASE Senate meeting on June 18, 2009. Instead the Expert Group was able to read the regulation with the same title approved at the LASE Senate meeting on March 8, 2012 (Document “Programmu apstiprināšana_2012”, downloadabe at LASE web page). This regulation describes an order to establish a new study programme and an order to review existing study programmes. The procedure of termination of the study programme has not been described. According to this regulation, initiation of developing a new study programme or reviewing an existing one comes from within the LASE. The management of the department, based on mutual agreement of the department staff, can initiate the development of a new study programme. Initiation of evaluation and further development of the existing study programme is in the hands of the study programme director. The approval of initiatives are in the hands of the Study council and Senate.
The regulation does not specify the role of stakeholders in the establishment of new or revisal of existing study programmes.

The recently approved “Planning of the Development Process of the Development Plan for the Study Direction “Health Care” for the Development Period of 2023-2028” (Studiju virziena “Veselības aprūpe” attīstības plāna attīstības periodam 2023.-2028.gadam izstrādes procesa plānojums) states that feedback from graduates, employers and other relevant stakeholders should be collected. The Expert Group, after request, has received survey examples used by LASE to collect the feedback from students, graduates and employers. These survey examples show that LASE requests respondent opinions on both changes needed in existing study courses as well as new study programme development (opinions requested exclusively from employers). During the interviews with employers the Expert Group received mixed response regarding employers experience with providing the feedback to LASE (some had provided, some never) and mixed response regarding employers confidence to gain significant impact on study programme content. The representative from Association of Latvian Physiotherapists highlighted the issue of high management staff changes of LASE that prevents effective cooperation.
Regarding collecting feedback from employers the Expert Group is not aware of specific details of these surveys - how many respondents are being targeted, what is the response rate etc. It makes sense to collect feedback from employers providing jobs to LASE graduates to evaluate de facto competencies. At the same time it could be valuable to collect opinions from a wider range of stakeholders to identify slack of specific workforce - possible future study programmes to develop.
The Expert Group did not witness any regulations that would specify the feedback provision to students, graduates and employers regarding study programme development and revisal.
In conclusion, mechanisms exist for study programme development and revisal. There are ways to collect information from stakeholders. Implementation of collected feedback is unclear. During the interview with stakeholders, the employers didn't give uniform testimony on their confidence about their feedback being noticed and implemented.

1.2.3. There is no specific policy or regulation regarding students' submission of students complaints or suggestions. According to the Self assessment report, “The procedure for submitting and reviewing student complaints and proposals is specified in the “Regulations on LASE Document Management’’’’. After reading the aforementioned document (confirmed in the Senate meeting on 03.10.2019.)
(https://lspa.lv/files/senate/decisions/2019/10/Dokumentu_parvaldibas_nolikums_03.10.2019..docx), the Expert ground did not find any proof that there is particular procedure specifically dedicated to dealing with students issues. This regulation specifies the submission, registration, procession of any type of information irrespective of the status of the submitter. The procedure of handling individual, Group or anonymous submission both in the form of a letter (physical or digital) or other document has not been described.
Regarding student complaints about their test/assessment results, there is a specific section in the Regulations of study programme learning outcome evaluation principles and order (Nolikums par LSPA studiju programmu apguves vērtēšanas pamatprincipiem un kārtību) dedicated to this topic (Appendix 1_2_Normatīvie_akti_LV). The order of submitting complaints or suggestions is mention in the Regulations of Distance Learning (Attālināto studiju kārtība) (Appendix 1_2_Normatīvie_akti_LV).
The Expert Group did not meet any other regulations that would describe the mechanism of submission of the students complaints or suggestions. The Expert Group received a superficial introduction to the content of the Students information system (Studentu informācijas sistēma) and did not have the time to independently examine the content - the Group is not aware what exact information is available to the students besides that of the LASE web page. With reference to the LASE web page, the Expert Group finds it extremely difficult to understand - it is hard to find necessary information without prior expert knowledge of the LASE internal document system. There is no search function built in the webpage that would help the user to find needed information, in this case - regulations of submission of complaints or suggestions. The up to date internal

regulations are not gathered in one section, coded by their actual titles. Instead they are bonded together with the meeting protocol of the institution responsible for the regulations. One must use the outside search engine to look for documents or check each meeting protocol manually. This fact does not help anyone wishing to or in need to submit a complaint or suggestion.
Another issue the Expert Group came up to was the fact that there is no option for anonymous submissions from students planned in the regulations. The Regulations on LASE Document Management mentions the order in which anonymous submission should be processed but this option is vaguely and tacitly described. During the interviews with Management the Expert Group did not receive affirmation that there is a safe way for students to submit anonymous complaints, The management states that “the doors are always open for students”, but this does not give an answer to question - how students can avoid the possible human factor - unethical actions of academic staff against whom students fulfil the complaint.

1.2.4. According to Self evaluation report, “LASE regularly collects information on: student admission results (once a year); student progress (once per term); reasons for dropping out (once per term); student and teaching staff mobility indicators (once a year); employment of graduates (graduates of the last year – once a year, other graduates – once every three years); quantitative and qualitative results of student scientific and creative activities (once a year)” (Self evaluation report, page 43) as well as “evaluation of classes conducted by tutors and analysis of evaluation results, which is considered at the meetings of academic and collegial institutions; analysis of the work efficiency of the academic staff (evaluated in connection with the election to the position, according to the results of surveys, at the end of each academic year evaluates the achievements in scientific research and other criteria of pedagogical activity); accounting of available study material and technical provision and analysis of its costs; analysis of the main performance indicators of LASE” (Self evaluation report, page 43).
The Expert group has not been able to see specifics of the data collection regarding study process, academic staff and resources.
As mentioned previously, the surveys used by LASE to collect feedback from students, graduates and employers seems to have a reasonable potential to provide the academy with valuable information.
Regarding the study course evaluation survey, two thirds of the questions were targeted at evaluation of the performance and other properties of the educator, only one third of the questions was study course content related. While these questions function as a quality assurance of academic staff, they provide limited potential to evaluate the study course content properties. Students are not provided the chance to give their insights regarding the value of the study course in their education. There is a last question (#12) - an open question - that contains seven different subjects upon which students are asked to provide their opinion. While traditionally there is limited engagement by students in open questions, this approach prevents respondents from actual involvement and increases the risk of valuable feedback being lost. In the opinion of the Expert group, study course evaluation surveys should make use of specific questions separately for each subject that LASE finds necessary to receive feedback.
LASE has provided the Expert group with two different survey examples targeted at graduates. The first one of them titled Students - graduates survey for study quality assessment (Studējošo - Absolventu Aptauja Studiju Kvalitātes Novērtēšanai) is a short form survey of 8 questions, four of them multiple choice questions, the rest - open ended questions. Respondents are asked to share opinions about usefulness and uselessness of study courses (unspecified) and to provide their suggestions regarding improvement of study courses and process.
The second graduates targeted survey titled Graduates survey for the study quality assessment (Absolventu Aptauja Studiju Kvalitātes Novērtēšanai) contains 12 mostly multiple choice questions regarding graduates education, employment and views on collaboration with LASE.

These surveys have the potential to provide LASE with valuable information.
LASE has also provided the Expert group with two survey examples targeted at employers. These surveys are basically identical, the difference is in target audience - one is for employers providing jobs to bachelor level physiotherapists students, other - for master level professionals. Responders are asked to evaluate the competence of graduates (Likert scale and multiple choice questions) and to provide their opinion on possible development. One question is dedicated to evaluation of competency of interns. These surveys have the potential to provide LASE with valuable information.
As mentioned previously, LASE also collects information about performance of academic staff based on 10 criteria (Self assessment report, page 37). The Expert group has limited knowledge about this procedure, but according to the report, this information should provide all level administration of LASE with valuable data. The Expert group has not been able to access the clear description of procedures and how these data are being used to improve the quality of the study field and study programmes.
As mentioned before, LASE has sufficient potential to collect valuable feedback from stakeholders, but in the Expert's group opinion there should be additional data collection from other sources to not only attune existing study programmes to ever changing field of health care but also to explore new possibilities and needs. The Expert group has not seen any proof of data collection from other stakeholders i.e. professional associations or government agencies. At the same time the group must emphasise that besides student count, drop out numbers and study result evaluations LASE seems to collect mostly subjective data (opinions).
Regarding provision of feedback by LASE to students and stakeholders, the Expert group has not identified clear policy being implemented. After conducting onsite interviews with LASE representatives, students, graduates and stakeholders. Expert group has an impression that feedback provision is spontaneous, not systematic, dependent on requests for feedback from stakeholders. Regarding student given feedback to academic staff the provision of response seems to be individual dependent.

1.2.5. The information about the study programme Physiotherapy published in Latvian on LASE webpage (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=864:profesionl-bakalaura-augstks-izgltbas-programma-fizioterapija-kods-42722&catid=118:pamatstudijas&Itemid=374) matches with that on State education information system webpage (https://www.viis.gov.lv/registri/izglitibas_programmas) with one exception - accreditation term. LASE webpage suggests that accreditation ends on 30.06.2022 while VIIS webpage shows 31.12.2022.
There is also a significant discrepancy between LASE webpage and AIKA e-platform available to Expert group (see Study programme Parameters) regarding the study programme director, where the information regarding the programme director differs. While publicly available information on AIKA webpage (https://eplatforma.aika.lv/index.php?r=site%2Fprogram%2Fview&id=890) states that both part time and full time studies in study programme Physiotherapy are available for foreign students in English, LASE webpage English language version proclaims that this study programme is not available for "full degree foreign students", as well the information about study programme director is outdated.
The information published in the LASE webpage regarding study programme Physiotherapy is sufficient for applicants to learn basic facts - it contains information about study length, study costs, study outcomes and qualification. Applicants are provided with the opportunity to take a more profound inquiry by reading study programme plan (year 2022/2023), extended study course descriptions (from 2017!) and a self evaluation report (from 2016!).
The information about the professional masters study programme Health Care Specialist in Sport published in Latvian on LASE webpage

(https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2197&Itemid=488) matches with that on State education information system web page (https://www.viis.gov.lv/registri/izglitibas_programmas) with one exception - qualification. In VIIS webpage there is only one qualification graduates will earn after finishing this study programme - Adapted Physical Activity Specialist in Rehabilitation, while LASE web page also includes qualification Sports Physiotherapist. The information published in the LASE webpage regarding the study programme Health Care Specialist in Sport is sufficient for applicants to learn basic facts - it contains information about study length, study outcomes and qualification. Information about admission terms is published. There is one significant difference between information in Latvian and in English - the tuition fee is publicly available only in Latvian. Expert group finds it necessary to emphasise that it is the responsibility of LASE to keep tracking all the information in public registers and make sure it is correct.
However it is essential to emphasise that the information both in the LASE and VIIS web pages proclaims that the study programme grants professional masters education, while the accreditation process according to the information available to the Expert group in the AIKA e-platform (see Study programme Parameters) states that the study programme grants academic masters education. Accordingly, there is no information in the LASE web page about academic masters study programme whatsoever. It would be very useful for actual and prospective students if LASE informed the public that there are plans for the program to be modified, as well as to indicate how such changes could affect students.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
The Internal Quality Assurance System seems to be very complex and hard to follow. If it takes the Expert group countless hours to get their heads around, it ought to be simpler for employees of the LASE to understand. Superficial description of it has been made publicly available.
While the procedure of development and revision of study programmes is clear, it doesn't specify the role of stakeholder. It is absolutely normal that only the academic staff is responsible for the quality of the study programme, the way relevant stakeholders should participate in the content and quality assurance should be described, clearly setting the boundaries of influence.
While there are relevant institutions, policies and regulations developed by LASE aimed at internal quality assurance, the most significant disadvantage of it is a lack of clear quality criteria and indicators in all relevant quality dimensions. What is the point of setting quality targets if there is no predetermined way of knowing to what degree these targets can be reached? The SMART principle could be applied here as well.
The quality of the data collected for the purpose of quality assurance is not always top level. The feedback surveys should be reevaluated because, even if fulfilled, they provide limited information. The LASE relies a lot on subjective data collected through these surveys. There should be more quantitative, personal opinion unrelated data used as an input.
There are limited options for submission of voluntary feedback as well as anonymous submissions of complaints. It doesn't take extreme measures to implement a voluntary feedback submission engine in the webpage of LASE, where a person can choose to reveal or not her identity. The most challenging task here would be to make it easily accessible.
The information about the undergraduate study programme “Physiotherapy” published on LASE webpage in Latvian is accurate and relevant, the one in English is outdated. The information about the professional masters study programme published on the web page is not to be evaluated here. The Expert group recommend LASE to publish information regarding planned transformation toward academic masters study programme and the possible impact of these changes to students.
Overall the most important weakness of the Internal quality assurance system is that even though

the policies, regulations and human resources are all means to collect data this is not analysed nor acted upon. There are many examples when significant risks and disadvantages have been discovered and described in previous evaluation by various evaluators, but they still exist today.

Strengths:
1. There are relevant institutions, policies and regulations developed by LASE aimed at internal quality assurance.
2. LASE has established strong traditions of collecting the study course evaluation feedback from students and seems to be on its way to regularly collect feedback from relevant stakeholders.
3. There seems to be clear quality criteria for academic staff.

Weaknesses:
1. The Internal Quality Assurance System is fragmented and unnecessarily hard to follow.
2. The Internal Quality Assurance System does not contain clear indicators for all relevant quality criteria, thus making these criteria obsolete.
3. There is no simple way built in the LASE web page for any interested actor to submit official suggestion on their own initiative
4. There is a lack of evidence that effective action is being taken to improve relevant issues based on the outputs of existing Internal Quality Assurance System
5. The lack of clear policy of feedback provision to relevant stakeholders hinders effective communication, necessary discussions and exchange of ideas, thus delaying timely adjustment of both study content and process.
6. Unclear description of the functions of Internal Quality Assurance Center and role of the students in the quality assurance of the study programmes hinders the effective incorporation of these actors in the quality assurance procedures.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

While there is a policy and regulations, the lack of qualitative quality criteria and indicators hampers the efficiency of the system. Despite having defined policies and procedures, inability to effectively implemented much needed changes (recommendations from various experts) indicates the flaws of the internal quality assurance system (see section 1.6 in the Study field assessment; see SWOT analysis in the LASE development strategy)

2 1.1 - The higher education institution/ college has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is a policy and regulations (See Quality Handbook, page 13). The issue of efficiency is not of concern in this criteria, it is analysed in in criteria P1 and 1.6

3 1.2 - A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There is a Regulations on Development and Approval of Study Programmes and a mechanism to

collect feedback of the quality has been established; there are statements form LASE representatives confirming regular evaluation.
However the amount of errors and inaccuracies in course descriptions casts doubt over the actual effectiveness of the quality assurance.

4 1.3 - The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and published.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

While there are clear regulations on study results evaluation and the study outcomes of every study course are described (see Regulations On The Basic Principles And Procedures For The Evaluation Of The Acquisition Of Lase Study Programmes), the quality of the predetermined study outcomes (results) in study course descriptions are inconsistent, thus hampering the use of evaluation principles.

5 1.4 - Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

While there are quality requirements available and the feedback from students about the study course are predominantly targeted at evaluation of the educators, the actual demand for academic staff to participate in teaching related competency development as well as clear strategy and support mechanism for educators seems to be missing.

6 1.5 - The higher education institution/ college ensures the collection and analysis of the information on the study achievements of the students, employment of the graduates, satisfaction of the students with the study programme, efficiency of the work of the academic staff, the study funds available and the disbursements thereof, as well as the key performance indicators of the higher education institution/ college.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

While there is clear evidence of various feedback being collected, (Appendix 2.2.4_1.Survey results.docx) the Expert group has not been able to verify the analysis part of the financial data and other key performance indicators

7 1.6 - The higher education institution/ college ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its quality assurance systems.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The continuous high level of student dropouts and the need to switch from professional masters studies to academic one is proof that the internal quality assurance system does not work efficiently.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1. According to the Self evaluation report (page 44), financial resources of LASE is formed by the State budget grant and tuition fees, however, funding for study field "Health care", 97% of financing is provided by student tuitions. According to Management of LASE and SAR (1.3.1.), tuition fees are set at such an amount to be able to provide implementation of the study process but at the same time still be competitive to the market of higher education in Latvia. There are doubts by the team

of experts that statement- LASE being able to provide implementation of studies on these tuition fees - is accurate.
Main funding costs are salaries and related staff expenses, which account for up to 79% of total costs of study field.
System for determining and redistributing the financial support required for the implementation of the study field is in the hands of the LASE management leaving little room for academic staff to make any changes.
According to the academic staff, financial support provided by LASE is sporadic and requires a lot of time and effort to receive anything, even for the smallest of things.
According to the Management and SAR (2.3.1.), a system for the implementation of determining and redistributing the financial support required is in place. According to the meeting with the management of the higher education institution, there are 12% allocated in the budget that are dedicated specifically for science. Specific support for the teaching staff to be able to perform research and develop their academic skills has not been described.
According to the meeting with the teaching staff of LASE, funding of scientific research is in the hands of the staff themselves - writing projects and thus receiving grants for the research, but support provided by the higher education institution is almost impossible to obtain, scarce and rarely accessible. Without devoting resources both financial and time for research purposes to academic staff (it is up to institution how to manage this incentive - either devote resources to each department or to each individual staff), the chances for reaching the main objectives of LASE - to become one of the leading universities in Baltic region, to develop innovative research in health care in sports that would be integrated in the study process - are close to zero. One can not become a leading university based on pure passion alone. The harsh reality is that any higher education institution must make regular and long term investment in its academic staff for them to become more competent, effective and competitive. Only a well designed work environment allows for the majority of talents to become operational and effective. Otherwise staff are too busy dealing with mundane tasks, even choosing to do more teaching than research just to earn their wages. Organising funding for research activities and devoting time combined with grant application training and support could lead to more actual research being done, that could facilitate both involvement of the students in research projects and dissemination of the results directly into teaching. Having more research-able, skilled and experienced academic staff on board is crucial to provision of top quality academic education.

1.3.2. There seems to be a lack of cost per performance evaluation behind decisions to purchase different methodological and technical provisions. There has been a substantial investment towards technology that benefits only a small number of students while at the same time, it is quite evident that there is a lack of basic equipment and apparatus including modern literature to supplement the academic and practical aspects of this course. For example, there is an extensive research facility full of expensive equipment. It has a lot of potential for local and international cooperations and research - the potential under utilised. In comparison - there is lack of facilities and materials for the training of basic skills for physiotherapy students (for example the lack of sufficient moulages for the studying of anatomy of the musculoskeletal system).
It has been noted by the Management and in the SAR (2.3.2.) that part of the study process has been outsourced to other institutions. It is the most efficient way to ensure clinical practice, however, it is not advisable for teaching basic study courses, leaving LASE in a risk to not be able to provide basic skills to students in case of change in cooperation institutions.
A unified system and procedures for the improvement and purchase of provision has not been provided to the Experts team and does not seem to be used when evaluating efficiency spendings.

1.3.3. According to the management of LASE, a new system has been developed to ensure effective

communication between the library and the academic staff in order to provide the resources that are most necessary in an efficient manner. However, at the time of the visit, The Expert group was not able to observe nor were convinced about the said system in action.
Following services are available in the Library:
● Assistance in finding bibliographic sources; computers with an alternative means of communication (digital magnifying glass - for the visually impaired) are available in the Library and the reading-room premises;
● Opportunity to work with the subscribed databases of the LASE Sports Branch Library;
● Black and white printing and copying, scanning (price list of services approved by the LASE Senate), and consultations on finding printed editions, etc.
● Electronic catalogue of literature is available, however it is in Latvian.
There are different online databases available to students and teaching staff. Database subscriptions are made on the recommendation of the teaching staff and within the framework of possible financial provision.
Databases that LASE subscribes to are:
● THOMSON REUTERS – Web of Science;
● SCOPUS – bibliographic database;
● SCIENCE DIRECT – World's largest electronic collection of science, technology and medicine;
● PROQUEST EBRARY - Ebook Central
According to a report of the Ministry of Health and the study course description as well as during the visit, plenty of obligatory literature and provided resources seemed to be outdated and limited. According SAR (2.3.3.) significant part of the collection consists of tutors' monographs, methodological and lecture materials published by LASE.
Also as noted by the experts team in the visit, literature in all languages and aspects seem to be insufficient, also in English, creating risks that students of the AMSP "Health care specialist in sport" would not have available sufficient literature for studies in English.
The material base provided is sufficient to ensure a basic knowledge and skills of parts of the study field, however there is a lack of resources that would provide the students with the possibility to gain more in-depth skills and knowledge (learning of some practical skills depends on cooperation institution that student attends for their study practice. That creates discrepancies between skill level and knowledge of graduates of LASE). According to the SAR (2.3.2.) and the meeting with the providers of the clinical rotations, the lack of teaching materials at the Higher Education Institution is often supplemented (has to be supplemented) by the collaborating partners that are involved in the development and the evolving of the practical and clinical skills of the students.

1.3.4. According to the SAR (2.3.4.) following information and communication technology solutions are used in the LASE study process:
● Latvian Academy of Sport Education course management system (CMS) (Moodle platform);
● Latvian Academy of Sports Pedagogy information system and MS Teams.
According to the meeting with the academic staff, they have been well educated in the possibilities of its use.
The E-learning environment or the Latvian Academy of Sport Education course management system (hereinafter - LASE CMS) (Moodle platform) is used as a tool for organising the study process in each study course. In the LASE CMS system, the teaching staff publish a description of the study course, the course acquisition plan, course acquisition requirements, descriptions of independent work tasks, examination questions, study course study materials and additional materials. In the Moodle environment, the main research directions of study papers, practice tasks, topics of the final papers and other information necessary for studies are available. In the LASE CMS system, study materials are provided, as well as independent work, examinations and tests can be submitted, as well as students' communication with the tutor, etc. activities can take place. The LASE CMS system is

available around the clock, regardless of the student's location, as long as the internet is available there.
The possibilities of updating and improving the informative and methodological base are limited by lack of additional funding to ensure an appropriate and easily accessible range of diverse (including digital) learning resources in the LASE course management system. Also to introduce new technological solutions in evaluation and create new technological solutions to increase the efficiency of information management in study programmes. To provide sufficient technological solutions, additional funding is needed.
Limitations exist due to the size of the presentations that can be uploaded, and the use of pre-recorded video lectures that also can help to reduce the workload of the academic staff. Some teaching staff have implemented the use of social media to be able to provide more effective and accessible study methods for their students, however resources needed should be provided by the higher education institution.
In the distance learning process, the Expert Group was informed that classes (lectures, seminars, colloquia, practical work, laboratory work, examinations, as well as virtual mobility events) and consultations are conducted using the Microsoft Teams platform or Skype (if Microsoft Teams is not available), using the auditorium indicated in the list of classes and consultations however, no example of this was shown to the group. The expert group would like to affirm that the health professions are 'hands on' professions that include skills that have to be taught, practised and supervised until that skill can be acquired; these can never be taught online or by any means of distance learning. The use of other platforms is permitted in agreement with the programme director and communicated to students. LASE communication with tutors and students takes place using the e-mail address assigned by LASE with the domain name @lspa.lv. The organisation of distance learning independent work takes place in the LASE course management system (CMS), where electronic study materials, electronic tests or study course evaluation requirements are published.
The quality of tutors' work is assessed by analysing the results of the student survey, the quality of e-study courses in Moodle and scientific and creative activities, methodological work, improvement of professional competence (once a year).
The LASE information system indicates the student's personal information (contact information, information on contracts, finances), the study plan for the entire study period with the obtained evaluations of study papers and the final evaluation of the study courses. In this system, the student can see their evaluations of study papers and the final evaluations of the study courses.

1.3.5. LASE has defined and implemented and followed procedures for selecting qualified teaching staff.
According to SAR (2.3.5.) The "LASE Human Resource Development Plan for 2018-2024" approved at the LASE Senate meeting of March 1, 2018, meeting protocol No. 7, and updated on January 14, 2021, emphasises the attraction, development and renewal of the teaching staff. The "LASE Human Resource Development Plan for 2018-2024" is annually evaluated and its priorities are updated for the next year. LASE employs both elected teaching staff and guest teaching staff. LASE has established internal procedures and mechanisms for the recruitment and/or employment of teaching staff "Regulations for LASE Academic Staff Positions" and "Regulations for LASE Academic Staff Elections", "Regulations for the LASE Council of Professors of the Health and Sport Science Branch[2]". LASE has established procedures and criteria for periodic evaluation of academic staff. The process of attracting and evaluating tutors is transparent, efficient and is one of the preconditions for the high quality of the study process.
An open competition is announced to attract teaching staff: for elected academic positions information is published in the official publisher "Latvijas Vēstnesis", as well as in other media resources, such as the LASE website and EURAXESS. Election to an academic position takes place on

the basis of the requirements of regulatory enactments and in accordance with the Regulations on Election to Academic Positions. The selection of the academic staff is based on the regulations of the LASE academic staff positions. LASE academic staff has all the rights and obligations specified in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education of the Republic of Latvia, Labour Law of the Republic of Latvia, Education Law of the Republic of Latvia, Law on Vocational Education of the Republic of Latvia, LASE Constitution, LASE Rules of Procedure, LASE Staff Code of Ethics, these Regulations and other regulatory enactments. The election procedure and detailed criteria are set out in the above-mentioned regulations. Any teaching staff who meets the set requirements has the right to apply for the announced position.
Regardless of the status of the tutor at the Academy, the evaluation of candidates is based on the following criteria:
● an application;
● a career description (Curriculum Vitae) in a Europass format;
● a conclusion of the academic staff of the department on the applicant's suitability for the position; list of publications relevant to the field of science in the last 6 (six) years (APA style);
● a report on the work during the previous election period;
● a questionnaire on scientific and pedagogical qualifications and organisational competence;
● all supporting documents (copies of publications, certificates, attestations, notices of publications accepted for publishing, programmes, approvals, etc.) on compliance with the criteria set for the position in accordance with the information given in the questionnaire.
● Conducting an open class.
The candidature of the candidate for the position is discussed at the meeting of the relevant structural unit, evaluating the candidate's study, scientific and methodological work, improvement of professional competence, awareness of sport, organisational work and ethics, loyalty and organisational values. The ethics, loyalty and awareness of the organisation's values regarding each applicant are evaluated according to certain criteria. Only the academic staff of the department votes for the evaluation. The conclusion of the department is attached to the documents to be submitted to the competition, regardless of the evaluation.
Persons who do not work at LASE, in addition to the above-mentioned documents, submit copies of scientific degrees, titles, copies of educational documents and other documents upon request. The structural unit may give a positive conclusion and recommend to the Rector to elect or appoint the mentioned person to the vacant position for one year.
In order to assess the applicant's compliance with the LASE Academic Staff Regulations, the submitted materials are reviewed by the Academic Staff Commission, which submits its decision to the Senate, which is of a recommendatory nature.
LASE fulfils the requirement of the Law on Higher Education Institutions regarding the number of foreign guest tutors, in the last two years the number of foreign guest tutors in the study field is 5. Through Eramsus+ teaching mobility, for the implementation of separate study course during the 2018-2019 study year, as well as during the 2019-2020 study year, several teaching staff from the Academic College at Wingate were involved.
At the beginning of the work, the tutor is introduced to the organisation of the study process, work safety and fire safety instruction is given, the tutor’s email is created, information about the work and opportunities to provide support is provided. Additional information on the organisation of the study process, scientific and creative activities, and internal regulations are available to the tutor in the e-environment (intranet).
According to the meeting with the academic staff, sadly, there is a lack of motivation for the qualified staff to work in the higher education institution because of low financial incentive - salaries are too low to attract teaching staff and keep them long term.

1.3.6. According to SAR (2.3.6.) LASE has established a unified procedure for ensuring the

qualification and quality of work of the academic staff in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 569 “Regulations on the Education and Professional Qualification of Teachers and the Procedure for Improving the Professional Competence of Teachers'', where it is stipulated that the academic staff of higher education institutions acquire professional development programmes on innovations in the higher education system, didactics of higher education institutions or educational work management in the amount of 160 academic hours (including at least 60 contact hours) by the end of the election term. Professional development may include appropriate international mobility, as well as participation in conferences and seminars, however even though this was stated in the SAR, meetings with the Department Heads and the Staff showed no evidence of this taking place These above-mentioned requirements are included in the “Regulations on LASE Academic Staff Elections'' and “Regulations of the LASE Council of Professors of the Health and Sport Science Branch’’.

LASE plans to systematically improve the qualification of the teaching staff, it has been set in the "LASE Human Resource Development Plan for 2018-2024”, andeach study year the continuing education process is specified, for example, the “LASE Professional Development and Lifelong Learning Centre Action Plan for 2022” and the “LASE Tutor Continuing Education Seminar, Interdepartmental Experience Exchange Plan for 2021/2022” is approved and implemented. Professional development includes appropriate international mobility. LASE was awarded the ERASMUS Charter for Higher Education 2014-2020 (ECHE). LASE continues to operate within the framework of the ERASMUS Charter for Higher Education 2021-2027. Participation in ERASMUS+ education and sports programmes is part of the Academy's strategy to modernise and internationalise study programmes of all cycles. Improving the quality of mobility of students and academic and general staff, participation in international higher education projects is a support for the internationalisation of a united European education area.

LASE provides, with the support of the ESF, the increase of foreign language competence of tutors, leadership and internship with a merchant for up to 200 hours. LASE promotes the scientific activity of tutors – financially supporting participation in conferences and seminars, publication of scientific research papers in internationally cited editions and data (Appendixes 2.4.4_3 and 2.4.4_4). Publication of monographs, teaching and methodological literature, organising and conducting seminars and courses outside the study process in the professional field (for employers, the public), as well as the participation of tutors in professional organisations, for example, ENPHE (European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education).

Experts Group has to note that according to the meeting with the academic staff, lack of time leaves limited options to carry out research and also the financial support is scarce and not easily accessible.

Reviewing the list of publications of the academic staff, there is a lack of scientific work published in internationally recognised, high impact peer reviewed journals.

The provision of the qualifications of the academic staff is implemented mainly in two directions: raising the pedagogical qualification and raising the professional qualification. During the election period, all tutors have the opportunity to participate in qualification improvement events organised by LASE and to acquire a continuing education programme in the amount of at least 60 contact hours. For example, raising the pedagogical qualification of tutors is also implemented by participating in Latvian and International scientific conferences and experience exchange events in other incl. foreign higher education institutions. The provision of professional qualification is also planned in the individual scientific activity plan for the year of each tutor, and its control is performed at the end of each study year as an individual report of the tutor in the structural unit and an interim report after the autumn semester. Tutors report on the implementation of their qualification improvement plan at departmental meetings.

All academic staff of the Department of Health Care is provided with participation in the LASE ESF project No. 8.2.2.0/18/A/023 “Strengthening of the academic staff of the Latvian Academy of Sport

Education in the field of “Health Care”” in professional development activities: improvement of English competence, and leadership and cooperation with the industry competence, as well as internship support measures at a merchant. As the aim of the project is to strengthen the academic staff in the field of “Health Care” at LASE, the “Health Care” study field involved foreign academic staff. During the reporting period, Head of Health Care, a tutor involved in this project, obtained a Doctoral scientific degree in the sub-field of sports pedagogy in the field of health and sports science.
Tutors increase their professional qualifications in scientific conferences, seminars, etc. events of professional association, for example, in the Latvian Association of Physiotherapists, as well as lecturers conduct separate professional qualification seminars in the Latvian Association of Physiotherapists, Department of Sports Physiotherapy. Participation of tutors in raising their professional and pedagogical qualification is confirmed by the certificates issued by these associations, which are submitted to the Department of Health Care together with the individual annual report.
Tutors participate in seminars organised by the LASE Lifelong Learning Centre. The teaching staff is motivated to participate in pedagogical qualification courses, for example, in the development of English language competence within the framework of the ESF project No. 8.2.2.0/18/A/023 “Strengthening the academic staff of the Latvian Academy of Sport Education in the field of “Health Care””, as English skills are required for work with foreign students in the Erasmus and the Master's programme. Even though there are courses provided, they have no brought sufficient outcomes for all of the teaching staff - during the visit it was observable that not all of the teaching staff has the appropriate skills to be able to teach students in English. Also there are language skill certificates (or of successful outcome of the qualification courses) avaliable only for part of the staff.
Tutors are interested and actively participate in information technology acquisition seminars, because during the last 2 years remote studies have been organised for students due to the epidemiological situation in the country related to the spread of COVID 19 infection. Tutors are motivated to work in different e-environments on Skype, MS Teams and Zoom platform, etc. Students very positively evaluate the tutors’ ability to organise classes in the field of modern IT technologies. The materials are placed in the CMS system, where information about the study course and lecture materials are available and knowledge control takes place in the study courses in the CMS system. Students are aware of the additional possibilities of IT technology, so the tests of theoretical knowledge are organised in remote contact individually with students, but it takes a lot of time. Most of the teaching staff is motivated to participate in the organised LASE events, because in this way they are provided with qualification improvement. This, in turn, promotes the quality of the content of the study course to be taught and its implementation.
The evaluation of the quality of the academic staff is performed with the help of regular student surveys and the evaluations of the students are also taken into account in the annual evaluation of the work quality of the teaching staff. The results of the surveys, together with the performance indicators of the planned individual work, are used to improve the LASE continuing education, management, basic activity and internal communication processes.

1.3.7. According to the meeting with the academic staff, the workload of the teaching staff is definitely not balanced, leaving some members of the full time teaching staff having up to 40 contact hours a week leaving little time for research and development of any other academic skills. It was also noted by the staff that this unbalanced workload creates difficulties for part of the staff to participate in the activities that would raise their qualification that are mentioned above and also lowers their ability to provide high quality research.

1.3.8. According to the SAR (2.3.8.) support necessary for students has been determined and provided.

Support provided is as follows:
● There is technical support provided by LASE IT and Technical Support centre available through email;
● For separate study courses there are weekly individual consultations organised remotely;
● Students are also provided with psychological assistance in the form of consultations with psychology tutors;
● Students with special needs are provided with individual acquisition of the study course and assistant services during classes. Individual consultations with special needs take place in person and remotely with the help of an assistant. Acquisition of study courses is facilitated not only by the individual responsiveness of the tutors, but also by the practical assistance of the study group members. Students with special needs are provided with access to study buildings and auditoriums. The Latvian Academy of Sport Education and its structural units: The Health Care in Sport Research Centre and the Sport Science Research Laboratory, have access for people with special needs to ensure access to education for every student.
Accessibility in different locations is as follows:
The main building. Building A. Brīvības gatve 333, Riga.
● Entrance from the yard.
● A lift is available in the building (however, during the visit it was not accessible due to being broken).
● It is possible to enter the sports game hall.
● A changing room, shower room and facilities are specially equipped for people with reduced mobility.
● It is possible to enter the building with a guide dog.
● It must be noted that the floor and stairs were broken at places and slippery during winter making it dangerous even for able bodied students to get to and from studies not to mention students with sight or mobility difficulties.
Health Care in Sport Research Centre: Brīvības gatve 333, Riga.
● Entrance from the yard
● A special lift is available in the building
● Specially equipped facilities and showers for people with reduced mobility.
● It is possible to enter the building with a guide dog.
Sport Science Research Laboratory: Brīvības gatve 333, Riga.
● Entrance from the yard. Ground cover in the yard due to large gaps between tiles can make it difficult to access the building through the yard especially in case of mobility impairment.
Building B. Brīvības gatve 333, Riga.
● A built ramp.
● A physiotherapy hall is available
Above-mentioned support and additional support is available to foreign students:
● psychological support in the first months: an opportunity to discuss and receive support in domestic matters;
● tutors use the existing material and technical means in working with students and additionally develop study materials and descriptions of practical work in English.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
There has been noted lack of resources for the study field. It ranges all around, starting with literature and ending with the facilities. System for funding scientific research is not clearly defined. A unified system and procedures have not been established for the improvement and purchase of provision, also there seems to be no analysis of efficiency of spent resources. Most buildings of LASE

are in need of repairs to increase accessibility of higher education to everyone. Materials of library are lacking to be able to provide highest quality of education. There space for growth in use of information and communication technology solutions by the whole HEI (higher education institution), not to make the most passionate academic staff search for creative solutions that would resolve lack of resources. Academic staff is qualified and passionate but overworked with unbalanced workload and underpaid. Needs of academic staff are often not heard and are not determined, they receive limited support. Support for students is available to plenty of resources.

Strengths:
1. Highly motivated management and teaching staff.
2. The recently developed Research centre of LASE is an impressive asset that has a lot of potential for scientific collaborations at national and international level.

Weaknesses:
1. Lack of resources in all of the study programmes, including "Physiotherapy" has been noted. LASE is in great need of additional financial resources to be able excell in its field, because now it mostly seems to be fighting to provide basic functions.
2. Environment of most study buildings is in need of refurbishing to make it more safe and friendly - there are broken stairs, a lack of lighting, slippery entrance, the lift was broken as well at the time of visit.
3. The workload between academic staff has been divided unequally thus making it harder for part of the staff to be adequately rested and work on their scientific research.
4. There is a lack of financial and educational support for academic staff to be able to provide best quality research and publications.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1. According to the LASE self-evaluation report, the main goal of the academy is to "... to develop sport science and research in health care in sport...", one of 5 strategic directions of development is "Scientific activity and innovation" (see Self-evaluation report, 2.4.1, page 60). According to "LASE Study Programme Development and Consolidation Plan for 2018-2024" (https://www.lspa.lv/files/senate/decisions/2018/03/LSPA_programmu_attistibas_plans_2018.pdf),
"the study process objective of LASE is to [..] develop innovative research in sports science, health care in sports, implement it in up-to-date learning process, that would promote the training of competent and competitive sports and health care specialists in sports for local and international job market."
The pros of LASE is the Research centre with a recently developed sports laboratory (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4379&Itemid=600), that has enthusiastic staff and high tech equipment. The research directions defined by Research centre (Injuries and rehabilitation in sports; kinesiology, biomechanics of movements and physical properties; functional capacity of organism of humans from various range of age, health status and physical fitness; physical activity of persons with functioning limitations) matches the regulation Research centre of Health care in sports (Veselības Aprūpes Sportā Izpētes Centra Nolikums - https://lspa.eu/files/2020/Izpetes_centra_nolikums_09.01.2020..pdf).
Possible disadvantage of the LASE is an overly general definition of strategic development - basically anything can be put under the "Scientific activity and innovation".
If experts look at a more narrow research objective "to develop research in health care in sport", the examples of research seen by the Expert group partially matches these objectives. Only a few publications of invited lecturers fit the scope of health care in sports - the rest are either pure sports

science or pure healthcare science (Appendix. 2_4_4._1_List of Publication.docx). The same situation is with the projects started or executed during the last five years, listed in the LASE web page (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=225&Itemid=390) .
At the same time the existing research projects match the needs of the professional field in general.

1.4.2. Despite the statements in the LASE Self-evaluation report (see section 2.4.2., page 61), there is limited evidence of research outcomes produced by LASE academic staff being used in the study process of all levels of study programmes.
One reason this doubt arises is the fact that only a limited number of academic staff involved in undergraduate teaching, both primary staff and involved lecturers, work as researchers. During the interview with the academic staff, the time available to do research, according to some of the responders, was between 15-30% yet the majority of the respondents emphasised the need for more time to actually do research. Consequently there is only that much research and innovation one can do in a few hours per week hence the amount of outcome to be integrated into the study process is limited.
The salary is another significant factor - during the interviews with academic staff one of the reasons for reluctance to participate in professional experience and qualification development exchange abroad was the fact that many of the employees work in LASE only as a part time job, the main income for them being their own private business.
Another issue that came up during the interviews was the enormous teaching load for some of the professors - according to some of them, they are engaging in teaching activities from 20-40 hours per week. On the other hand one of the leading researchers of LASE, who has published more than 15 publications during the last 5 years, works mostly in research hence has limited teaching duties.
During the onsite visit to the research laboratories, the main researcher told the Expert group that so far the laboratory has been used mostly for research and the students of undergraduate studies have limited hours in there as a part of their basic studies. Students can receive access to the laboratory to do their qualification thesis. At the same time any academic staff can request access to the laboratory as it has not been fully booked - there are some projects with clear time schedules and reservation, but it takes less than a half of available time.
Another issue here is that, despite few monographs being published by LASE academic staff, most of the study course descriptions contained references to out-dated literature (Appendix.3.2.1._4_Descriptions.docx).

1.4.3. According to the LASE Self-evaluation report (section 2.4.3., page 62), there are international cooperation agreements with 21 European foreign higher education institutions, and recently, due to the political situation, four agreements have been suspended. Simultaneously the LASE web page states that there are 36 foreign cooperation partners in research (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4113&Itemid=594).
Need for international cooperation has been identified in the Development Strategy of LASE 2015-2020 (Latvijas Sporta pedagoģijas akadēmijas Attīstības Stratēģija 2015-2020 https://www.lspa.lv/files/senate/decisions/2015/04/LSPA_Strategija_2015_2020.pdf) as well as in LASE Modernisation and Internationalisation strategy 2021-2027 (Latvijas Sporta pedagoģijas akadēmijas Modernizācijas Un Internacionalizācijas Stratēģija 2021. – 2027. Gadam - https://lspa.lv/files/senate/decisions/2020/05/LSPA_Internacionalizacijas_strategija.pdf).
One of possible international cooperation opportunities is the scientific conference organisation (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=132&Itemid=183) .
There is evidence that LASE researchers work in cooperation with foreign partners:

- CancerBeat

(https://www.lspa.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4538:ptniecba-un-izgltba-baltijas-ptniecbas-programma&catid=225:ptniecbas-projekti&Itemid=390)

● REHAB (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4516:lspa-koordintaj-projekt-rehab-izstrdtas-tieaistes-studiju-programmas-rehabilitcij&catid=116:petnieciba&Itemid=165)

● EUPASMOS (https://eupasmos.com)

The duty to organise the international cooperation in research is prescribed in the Regulation of Science Division of Latvian Academy of Sport Education (Zinātnes daļas nolikums - https://lspa.eu/files/2019/Zinatnes_dalas_nolikums_05.12.2019.pdf).

At the same time, the Regulation of Research centre of Health care in sports (Veselības Aprūpes Sportā Izpētes Centra Nolikums - https://lspa.eu/files/2020/Izpetes_centra_nolikums_09.01.2020..pdf) does not impose the duty to Laboratory to incorporate in international research.

There are many hopes put on ERASMUS+ programme - during the interview with the LASE management, the ERASMUS+ programme was mentioned as one of the most important international cooperation tools. The fact that LASE had more than 21 cooperation agreements with different higher education institutions supports this.

There is not much evidence that international cooperation in healthcare research is being purposely developed by the management of the LASE.

1.4.4. The Development Strategy of LASE 2015-2020 (Latvijas Sporta pedagoģijas akadēmijas Attīstības Stratēģija 2015-2020 https://www.lspa.lv/files/senate/decisions/2015/04/LSPA_Strategija_2015_2020.pdf) that is extended to this date, states that one of the tasks necessary to reach academy objectives is to “motivate LASE employees according to their excellence in studies and research”. No further description of this motivation has been provided.

One of the objectives of LASE during the previous 5 years was to invest in research infrastructure. That has been done. It is hard to estimate the actual impact of this step to increasing the involvement of academic staff in research.

The LASE Science and Research Development Strategy 2015-2020 (Latvijas Sporta Pedagoģijas Akadēmijas Zinātnes Un Pētniecības Attīstības Stratēģija 2015.-2020. Gadam https://www.lspa.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2474&Itemid=514) duplicate the same statements that are presented in general Development Strategy 2015-2020. There one can read that LASE already in 2015 had identified a large teaching load, insufficient financial incentive of researchers and academic staff involved in research as existing weaknesses of LASE. No specific tasks have been designated to solve these issues.

The Expert group has not witnessed any specific and detail oriented plan of LASE targeted at increasing the involvement of academic staff in research.

At the same time there are regulations that state how many hours academic staff should be working directly on research (Akadēmiskā personāla darba laika uzskaites kārtība LSPA - https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiI6_K2h7b8AhVOlYsKHTFUBnoQFnoECAkQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.lspa.lv%2Ffiles%2F2020%2FAkad_personala_darba_uzskaite_2019_05.11.2020.doc&usg=AOvVaw3UQHJnNlRUnjwkbv-KPNuJ). What makes these requirements ambiguous is the fact that hours one should be working on specific tasks are not indicated for a week or month but for the entire year as a whole, and to make things more complicated, there is no separation between work one should spend on research or methodological work. In example, a professor should spend at least 250 hours per year working on research or methodological tasks. The same document indicates the maximal amount of hours one can spend on specific scientific activities.

The LASE Self-evaluation report states, that “The involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research activities is taking place by:

● Providing methodological and informative support for research design, research methods, information technology solutions for research needs. For example, by organising scientific seminars, methodological conferences.
[..]
● Providing financial support for the preparation of publications and participation in conferences."
The Expert group did not meet any proof of these statements. While some of the academic staff mentioned monthly training for academic staff, this was in the context of education skills.
The OSRESS summer school that mentions introduction to scientific methodology is targeted mostly on students and is not related to the healthcare field (http://osress.weebly.com).
The LASE continuous education centre provides various continuous education events on a variety of topics. The plan of 2021 included events for academic staff. None of those events were research methodology or otherwise research related (https://lspa.eu/files/2021/Prof.pilnveide_plans_2020_21.pdf). Plans from previous years or from 2022 are not available.
According to information provided by academic staff during the interview, academic and research staff need more support with application development for research grants. According to these interviews, no organised support exists in LASE regarding mastering grant application preparation skills. Some of the academic staff told the Expert group that "If you are very persistent, you can talk with the management and receive some funding."
According to Regulation of Science Division of Latvian Academy of Sport Education (Zinātnes daļas nolikums - https://lspa.eu/files/2019/Zinatnes_dalas_nolikums_05.12.2019.pdf), there are several sources of funding for scientific activities carried out by Science division. The regulation does not impose the duty to the Science division to promote scientific work uptake of academic staff or to support them in their research endeavours, unless these actions are covered under Science division objectives 2.2.2. to 2.2.6. The Expert group could not find any regulations defining the amount of financial support dedicated to every academic staff to support their scientific work (i.e. funding laboratory tests, participation fees in international congress, publishing in top peer reviewed journals with high citation index, learning specific skill etc.) or other incentives besides request to be scientifically active.
In conclusion there is not much evidence that existing mechanisms of LASE to involve academic staff in research is efficient and well functioning.

1.4.5. According to Law on Higher Education Institutions, section 58, "(1) Academic bachelor and master's degree study programmes shall end in final examinations, which include the formulation and defending of a bachelor or master's thesis." (https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967). This law has been followed.
Regulation of Science Division of Latvian Academy of Sport Education (Zinātnes daļas nolikums - https://lspa.eu/files/2019/Zinatnes_dalas_nolikums_05.12.2019.pdf), provide that the objectives of Science division is to promote high quality bachelor or master's thesis development by students and to promote uptake of knowledge and skills by students through the professional and academic study courses.
The Internal regulations for students (Iekšējās kārtības noteikumi studējošajiem - https://www.lspa.lv/files/senate/decisions/2020/08/Studentu_kartibas_noteikumi_2020.pdf) provide that students have rights to use LASE facilities and equipment for study process and to participate in scientific work.
LASE web page section "To Students" (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3955&Itemid=171) does not contain a separate subsection dedicated to scientific work. The Research section (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3959&Itemid=72) does not contain a student targeted subsection dedicated to attracting students to the world of research. The

annual Scientific Conference Of Doctoral And Master's Students Of The Latvian Academy Of Sports Pedagogy In Sports Science (https://www.lspa.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=132&Itemid=183) in its title excludes undergraduates as a target audience.
According to the statement of the lead researcher and head of the research centre laboratory during the onsite visit, LASE does have some research projects that have a vertical project system - students from all level study programmes participate in the project. The expert group has not seen any regulations that would require this approach to be used.
As mentioned in LASE Self-evaluation report (section 2.4.5., page 67), the number of students utilising the opportunities are too low. There is an impression that the way for students to a professional researcher-led research project is more likely circumstantial than systematically organised.
While academic staff during the interview emphasised that the evidence for students centred learning in LASE is the opportunity for students to choose their own research topics, there was not much else to back this statement. The Expert group has not seen convincing evidence that the study process in LASE is going according to research based learning principles, especially taking into account the proportion of lectures in the study courses. Research based learning implementation is more likely individual educator dependent.

1.4.6. Despite the statement of the Self-evaluation report (section 2.4.6, page 68), the use of video recorded lectures in LASE is not a widespread practice. Most of the lecturers still provide lectures in person, even through distance learning. According to the statements given by academic staff during the interview, the reason for this practice is multilayered - there is poor technical support (it takes ages to upload or download large volume files into the moodle), there are no regulations demanding shifting from in-person lecturing to recorded lectures. Some lecturers had used alternative solutions for recording their own lectures - organising Facebook groups for students, recording the lecture during the sessions etc. The innovations in the learning process seems to be more likely educator dependent than a result of systemic approach.
It is necessary to commend the IT department of LASE for their enthusiasm and devotion to progress. While being a comparatively small department (3 employees) for higher education institution with ambitions to become an international player, the staff is working on improving the existing Moodle environment and to introduce new technical solutions. At the same time it must be noticed that the demand from academic staff for technical assistance is relatively low. The evidence for this statement is the testimony given by the head of the IT department - he personally processes all the assistance requests himself. There is no evidence to believe that low demand for IT department assistance is due to the extremely advanced skill set for most of the LASE employees.
At the same time it must be emphasised that the web page of the LASE is outdated, hard to follow and almost impossible to be used to efficiently find necessary LASE internal regulations. The Expert group did not have a chance to familiarise themselves with the Student Information system from the viewpoint of the students.
During the onsite visit the Expert group did not witness a lot of technical innovations in the LASE classrooms. Besides fresh laboratory equipment that is occasionally used for teaching, the rest of the equipment was low-tech or outdated.
What should be noticed is the fact that according to directive of Cabinet of Ministers (Ministru kabineta 2022. gada 13. decembra rīkojums Nr. 903 "Par Latvijas Sporta pedagoģijas akadēmijas reorganizāciju". https://likumi.lv/ta/id/337974), there will be a reorganisation of LASE - the Academy by January 1, 2026. will be merged with Riga Stradiņš university (RSU). The RSU is comparatively more advanced in various teaching innovations (https://www.rsu.lv/mitc) and has higher ranking on world universities ranks (i.e. QS WORLD university ranking).

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions

While ongoing research projects and so far published students theses match the development goals of the LASE, there is no clear scientific vision regarding the field of health care. Despite the fact that there are all these policies, regulations and institutions, there are only a few international and local research cooperation projects.

There is no policy to involve as many students into research as possible. The academy itself has noticed the devastatingly low interest of students in research. Could it be related to the fact that the very study process still is mostly teacher centred? The research based study principles are something to thrive for in future - to evoke the inner researcher in if not all then most of the students.

The Expert group witnessed limited evidence of scientific research and its outcomes being widely incorporated in teaching the basic competences in undergraduate studies.

While there are somewhat clear regulations on the time academic staff should be devoting to research, there is no specific funding regulated and channelled for this purpose. The system of receiving the funding from LASE is unclear.

It has been proclaimed that the Science division is responsible for attracting funds for research, it is not clear what support mechanisms the Science division can use for this mission. At the same time there appears to be something missing in internal communication as academic staff are not aware of any support mechanism available in LASE for them to successfully apply for research grants. Existing research projects seem to be individual leading researcher dependent.

There is unfortunate retardation regarding overall information technology use in LASE. While there is no doubt about the proficiency of laboratory workers, the rest of the academy still lives in the low tech reality where simulation based learning, that could spark some scientific ideas in both academic staff and students is out of reach.

Strengths:

The research in the field of health care has a large potential for many reasons:

1. Strong sports science traditions in LASE and the conceptual support of the management.
2. Indescribably innovative, resilient and passionate research staff.
3. High tech research laboratory.
4. Tradition of students research conference, participation in Baltic Sports Science Society, LASE own scientific journal.
5. Merging with Riga Stradiņš university in foreseeable future.

Weaknesses:

1. No specific funding for research activities of LASE academic staff is being regulated and transparently provided.
2. There is no clear scientific vision regarding the field of health care.
3. There is no policy to involve as many students into research as possible.
4. The information technology infrastructure of LASE is outdated and does not support effective academic and scientific work.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

1 R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The academy has failed to use the full potential of its resources (the laboratory, the academic

and research staff, Science division, International liaison department) due to lack of appropriate policies and regulations. The existing policies and regulations are not delivering the expected outcomes, they should be revised.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1 LASE, the Academy has a proven record of cooperation with various institutions and entities within the Latvian state. They have taken an active part working and contributing to professional and state associations most of this is through scientific research and creative activities. There is evidence of co-operation with various employers and institutions that allow methodological events and sites for practice placements. The initiative to further strengthen ties with Riga Stradins University is a step in the right direction and the sharing of resources both academic and professional can only lead to a better and more prestigious academic product.
During the meetings held with the management and senior staff at LASE in which the Group were informed that an open door policy exists, stakeholders (both the graduates and employers) noted that the Academy has adopted a policy of not being open to the public, in that they did not disseminate information and that they ought to be more open to suggestions and show more initiatives to further cooperation and development.

1.5.2 LASE's intentions are to co-operate with higher education institutions of other countries trying to promote the exchange of students and academic staff. This has been documented extensively in the SAR and the quality of the institutions that have signed agreements are very honourable. The intentions of LASE to promote exchange and raise the level of education on paper have not been achieved. Unfortunately the facts differ in that with regards to Internationalisation very little has been done and/or implemented since the last review and assessment carried out previously. The need for internationalisation was stressed as one of the ways that LASE can improve its academic standard both locally and internationally. It can also help be a means of financial injection of funds.
The SAR states that these cooperation agreements were "implemented within the framework of the study direction with various foreign institutions ensures the achievement of the goals and study results of the direction" however there is no evidence that it has promoted the mobility of students and academic staff either incoming or outgoing, thus cannot be said to have achieved its purpose to raise the quality of education being offered.

1.5.3 LASE has a very poor Internationalisation record - there are 48 Erasmus agreements with various institutions, yet only 10 are for Physiotherapy and 3 for Teacher mobility. There are 32 Cooperation Agreements with Foreign Institutions, these numbers appear to be very impressive but have only led to: 13 outgoing students in 2017 dwindling down to 4 in the academic year 2021/22.
Incoming students figures range from 7 in 2017 to 0 in the last two years.
Outgoing members of Teaching Staff 2 in the last 5 years.
Incoming Teaching Staff: 33 in the last five years, but only 7 have actually taught/contributed to LASE.
Covid, language of the country where the agreements are signed with, and financial reasons were offered by management why the Internationalisation process has not succeeded, however, other European countries have managed to tackle these situations and the Erasmus programmes should be availed of further.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions

The LASE has endeavoured to initiate, sustain and maintain a number of cooperation agreements with various other Universities, Institutes and entities with the Latvian state. The amalgamation of LASE with Riga Stradins University in the near future to hold a joint Masters programme is a move in the right direction. However, LASE has a very poor cooperation and internationalisation record at Institutional, Staff and Student levels. LASE has a large number of cooperation agreements with a number of Universities and Institutions in Europe, but these are not bearing the fruit one would expect from such agreements.
The fact that the management and the official LASE website (https://www.lspa.eu/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=22&Itemid=2) state that the degree in Physiotherapy "is not offered to full degree foreign students" does not help the internationalisation image that the Academy is trying to project.
The number of Staff and Student both incoming and outgoing is constantly dwindling leaving the staff and students with a very insular perspective of Physiotherapy and Sport Rehabilitation.
The decision not to offer the undergraduate Physiotherapy course in English might make commercial sense in the short term but very narrow minded for the future.
The Academy as a whole has to become more transparent and be the motivating force to encourage more staff and students to benefit from the cooperation agreements.
Management has to financially help their staff to become more proficient in foreign languages especially English. if the Academy really wants to promote Internationalisation and to deliver a high standard of education to any English speaking applicants.

Strengths:
1. LASE has developed a good strategy of cooperation with various institutions, associations and universities within Latvia.
2. LASE has signed a large number of agreements with overseas universities.

Weaknesses:
1. The agreements with the foreign universities have not achieved the expected intentions of attracting foreign staff to raise the level of education.
2. The agreements have not attracted an appreciable number of either outgoing or incoming students to LASE using the Erasmus+ programme.
3. LASE has not been capable of attracting enough full time students to enrol at either undergraduate or at masters level.
4. LASE does not intend to offer the Bachelors course in Physiotherapy in the English language any longer thus further weakening its exposure to the English speaking world.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

1 R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Cooperation within the Latvian state has improved and bearing fruit however this cannot be stated about cooperation on all local and international levels. The Board of the Latvian Association of Physiotherapists has stated that communication with LASE was particularly difficult. The grading reflects the analysis of this section.

1.6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures

Analysis

1.6.1. The previous assessment of the study field Health Care and Professional Bachelor's study programme "Physiotherapy" and the Professional Master's study programme "Health Care Specialist in Sports" resulted in 15 recommendations for the BSc Physiotherapy course and 10 recommendations for the Masters course. The overall implementation for the recommendations generally speaking have either been partially addressed or not at all.
Comments regarding each recommendation:
1) There are significant differences between the general theoretical and practical components of the courses being assessed, the recommendations were that all clinical and related skills are to be taught within the premises of the LASE:
The reply to these recommendations taken from the Appendix 3 page 1 to this was that "Clinical Study Courses are included from Year 1". The Study Programme plan indicates that out of a compulsory 60 ECTs for year 1 only 6 are related to Clinical Skills. However, the recommendation states that all clinical and related skills are taught within the Academy itself, by the LASE staff themselves, only then can LASE be in a position to regulate what is being taught, and to what extent, and to harmonise the standard of education between students. The present practice as witnessed by the Expert Group, commented upon by both the current students and graduated staff is that most skills are not taught within LASE but at different centres where students are sent for their Clinical Practice. Quote from one of the students ''we only had one theory lesson about Hydrotherapy"; there is no electrotherapy apparatus within the Academy, the skills of applying physical therapy agents are taught in clinical internship placements, but the Expert Group have extremely limited knowledge about the actual setting and teaching process being carried out. The only clinical internship placement shown to the Group of Experts had only two TENS devices and two internship supervisors, meaning a limited number of students have an opportunity to learn a limited set of skills.
The Expert Group did not witness appropriate and sufficient amounts of physical therapy apparatus be it electric, thermal or other physical agents in the premises of Academy. What the expert Group witnessed during the onsite visit was teaching classrooms with various splints and massage tables that were presented to the expert Group, but no other tool necessary for qualitative learning of basic patient transfer and independent mobility, independent ADL. The old and new scientific laboratory was presented, but, according to presenting researchers, these laboratories are predominantly used for scientific work, with few exceptions regarding student learning. Experts could see that there are various training equipment available in the gyms, but these premises were not included in the onsite visit presentation. The expert Group was presented with the basketball/indoor sports field where teaching of gymnastics takes place. The experts Group can conclude that there is equipment available for students to learn endurance and strength training in a generally healthy population, but no specific equipment was presented for aforementioned training in the special needs population. No set of manufactured, standardised orthosis was presented to the Expert Group. All these facts lead the Expert Group to doubt the statement made in Appendix_3_ Recommendations, that activities executed by Academy complies with the recommendations from previous accreditation assessment.
To simplify what was being recommended was that all skills from patient handling, to all the manual skills, use of physical apparatus, use of electrotherapy apparatus, all types of joint care and immobilisation, the use of appliances to aid gait, etc. - these are the basic needs for any physiotherapist or specialist in sports rehabilitation - have to be taught within the educational establishment, in this case LASE.
2) More investment is needed for the purchase of teaching aids, physiotherapy equipment and facilities to ensure the completion of the above pre-clinical skills mentioned in the previous recommendation:
Very little evidence to this recommendation has been presented, LASE has invested very heavily in a new Sports Research Centre and as the name implies the people who are and will benefit from this

centre are those doing research and not the undergraduate (who are the majority) or the Masters students unless they are doing a research thesis requiring the centre. Unless students have these basic requirements, then students cannot be taught these basic skills within LASE. Unfortunately these students and the resources behind their education cannot be compared to other established educational centres. A number of new couches and a number of pairs of crutches are not considered anywhere close to adequate regarding rehabilitation for a proper education. The Expert Group did not witness any up-to date equipment to learn basics in important clinical skills like equipment for chest physiotherapy (positive and negative pressure devices), mechanical patient transfer devices, set of standardised assessment tools for various functional outcomes i.e. Box and Block test for arm and hand function ect.

3) Laboratories should be set up to develop the above mentioned skills and competences:

An inspection of the Academy as has been stated previously, has demonstrated that a 1.2 million euro Research Centre has been built and equipped, however the sites where the basic preclinical skills and competences for both the Bachelor and Master's course are taught have been ignored. Presently multi use teaching rooms/possibly doubled over as practical training laboratories were shown to the Expert Group. One would expect a laboratory for the teaching and practising of manual skills, a Laboratory for the teaching and practice of physical agents, heat or cold, A laboratory for the teaching and practising of Electrotherapy apparatus, these could be considered basic and necessary. A practical training laboratory could also be a room for simulation based learning - an imitation of clinical setting to learn basics of physiotherapy in intensive care, bedside physiotherapy in various settings (traumatology, neurology ect.), an imitation of real life living space - bathroom, WC, ect. - to learn adaptation of movement and posture for activities of daily living, an imitation of a physiotherapy room in an outpatient setting to learn safe communication and initial assessment/examination of patients. The Expert Group did not witness any specific equipment to learn play based physiotherapy in paediatrics.

4) Internationalisation should be promoted for both students and staff:

There appears to be an effort by LASE during the academic years 2017-2019 to promote internationalisation but following this review it appears that this process has dwindled down to nothing regarding visiting academic staff and incoming students during the last academic years. The importance of the English language or any other common European language does not appear to be a priority contrary to the previous recommendation in 2017. The ending of the Bachelor course of Physiotherapy in English for the coming academic year has not been adequately justified both in the Self Assessment Document or by the Management and Staff during the meetings held. Acknowledging the disastrous impact of Covid-19 pandemic on all lives education included during 2020-2021 years, no visible efforts to initialise internationalisation in 2022 for both students and academic staff was detected. The project “"Innovative Rehabilitation Education - Introduction of new master's degree programs in Ukraine" (contract no. 2018-2963 / 001-001)” does not show a significant impact on overall quality of LASE study field or study process as the persons participation in this project have limited involvement in development of the study field and study programmes. There is no evidence of the outcomes of this project being systematically invested in the development of the study field.

5) International cooperation in the field of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation with other foreign universities to promote and improve the international experience of the teaching staff:

LASE does have a large number (48) of Erasmus agreements with foreign institutions, however only 3 are for Teaching Mobility. There are also 32 Cooperation Agreements with foreign institutions, however there is very little evidence that these are being utilised. Unfortunately the Management has not shown the initiative to promote such exchanges. Lack of funding, unfamiliarity with a foreign language and time have been voiced by the staff when interviewed as being the drawbacks why this is not taking place.

6) The current study programmes for physiotherapy and the masters in sports science should

emphasise the current problems in Latvia:
There is evidence that LASE has participated in a number of co-operative conferences and partnerships to tackle some of the conditions and pathologies the Latvian population is and will be facing in the future. However the physiotherapy programme that is at undergraduate level should be one that covers all aspects of physiotherapy and gives an introduction to all the conditions, pathologies and skills required to treat such conditions. Even following previous recommendations by the Experts Group, the current course programme appears to not include basic subjects like, for example, obesity, Care of the Elderly, Pain and Dementia.
7) Changes should be introduced to the methods of teaching and learning that will promote LifeLong Learning:
The Expert Group tried to extract from the students and the staff the teaching and learning methodologies being used at LASE, it still appears that Lectures appear to be the commonest form of teaching taking place. Teamwork and role play was mentioned by the staff as being utilised, however the students or staff were not familiar with, for example, Problem Based Learning as an alternative teaching method. Getting students to become independent learners, to encourage students to use all means of independent research will result in better Life Long Learners.
8) There is very little evidence that students in these study programmes are given the opportunity to evaluate or reflect upon their learning:
The previous recommendation by the Expert Group was to introduce a Reflective Portfolio, there is no evidence that this suggestion has been taken on. There are signs of misinterpretation or even lack of basic understanding of the terms “Reflection” and “Reflection portfolio”. In the Appendix_3_ Recommendations Academy staff writes that opportunities for students to reflect about their own learning is organised by Study course evaluation surveys. After demanding additional information about these surveys, the Expert Group received an example of the surveys (Anketu paraugi), that contains the aforementioned survey. It clearly shows that students are asked to subjectively evaluate the performance of the educator but not their own learning process. In the interviews students could not recall systematic and regular demands to write individual reflections about their own learning. The Expert Group can conclude that there is limited evidence of Student centred learning being implemented and practised in LASE.
9) A versatile research methodology must be introduced:
According to the Self Assessment Document this recommendation has been implemented. At the same time there is a little evidence that versatile research methodology actually is being taught in LASE. For example, while qualitative research in study programme Physiotherapy has been mentioned in the study course descriptions precisely one time, there is no other evidence that it actually is being included in the teaching process. A basis for doubt is in the fact, that only quantitative data analysis has been described in study course descriptions (study courses Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Research; Research Methodology in Health Care) and the literature list for these study courses does not refer to any source related to qualitative or mixed methods research (Appendix 3.2.1._5. Descriptions). In the study course "Research Methodology in Health Care" the content (topics) presented in the course description do not correspond to the outcome of the course at all, and therefore the goal of the course and the program in general will not be achieved.
10) More modern approaches to the treatment of various pathologies should be promoted:
The Self Assessment Document, for example, on page 19 mentions various research sites, apparatus and activities, but does not mention how any of these have been incorporated and being taught and practised by students during their course. The Teaching Laboratories visited did not show any evidence of any resources that might be supporting this recommendation.
11) One of the solutions to implement the relevant changes to the above is to attract guest lecturers from overseas:
Initially during the academic years 2017-2020 LASE had 33 Incoming Academic or professional staff

visiting the Academy, however it should be noted that only 7 of these 33 incoming staff actually lectured and contributed to the students and staff education and professionalisation.
12) At least one journal related to the Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation sector should be available in the library:
Even though the Self Assessment (page 21) states that the 'Physiotherapy Journal' has been ordered, there was no evidence of this journal or any other journal in the library.
13) The infrastructure of the building should be such that access to students, teachers and patients with special needs can be done easily and safely:
There appears to be very little done regarding this recommendation, one of the entrances to the Academy is very slippery and dangerous in wintery conditions, there are broken/ missing tiles, uneven surfaces, broken steps, unlit corridors and still one lift to cater for all the people who wish to visit the library or any other floors in the main building (Building A). The only elevator in the LASE premises was out of order during the expert onsite visit, at the same time there was a poster by the elevator door that stated that students are not allowed to use the elevator. The limited access is also mentioned in LASE webpage (https://lspa.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=147&Itemid=141). People with movement disabilities can not reach higher than the ground floor of building B. The new science laboratory is independently accessible by people with movement disabilities.
14) To research the reasons for the high dropout rate of first year students in the study programme offered by LASE:
The reason that students tend to drop out from the first year after enrolling at LASE according to the management and the self assessment document is that certain study courses/subjects, especially anatomy and physiology are being found to be too difficult for students to handle. However the Management and staff did not show the Expert Group any research that was carried out to verify these statements. It ought to be noted that both current students and graduates stated that they wished that subjects like Anatomy ought to be given at a higher standard or in more depth. It was also recommended that maybe the entry requirements could be made slightly stricter to have better students attending thus not finding the course so difficult was not dealt with by the management.
The Management also mentioned that the reason for high dropout rates is the financial status of the students - many students parallel to studies pick up a job to provide for themselves. Accordingly, the job interferes with student ability to learn appropriately. At the same time some graduates highly valued the ability to be able to combine work with their studies.
15) Renovation of the student dormitories:
According to the Self Assessment Document but not verified by the Expert Group, Changes to the student dormitories have taken place and have been upgraded.
According to a picture presented in LASE webpage (https://lspa.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=147&Itemid=141), dormitories are unavailable to persons with movement disabilities.

Summary of recommendations of the Professional Master's Higher Education Programme ‘’Health Care Specialist in Sport’’:
1) To change the Study Programme to be inline with the Bologna process using Dublin descriptors and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System:
This recommendation has been adhered to and is now available in the specified format.
2) The investment and reference to above mentioned comments do not mean that there has to be a need for doubling the basic equipment and facilities used for the sports oriented Masters programme:
The comments that have been given to Recommendations 2&3 for the physiotherapy course still stand for this recommendation. There is no need to double Teaching apparatus and equipment for the two courses, these can easily be utilised by proper management by both, however these are still

not available. On the other hand the opening of the new Health care in Sports Research Centre is an excellent example of how this can be shared by both courses for research purposes.
3) More lecture Rooms and Laboratories are required:
These can be shared with the Physiotherapy course, but more space is necessary if and when the skills necessary to become physiotherapists and Health Care Specialists in Sports are going to be taught and practised within the actual LASE building and not on clinical sites.
4) More books and journals are necessary for a Master's level course:
It is the intention that an Academic Masters is to commence at LASE to replace the professional masters that there is at present. The recommendation was not adhered to, there are no actual journals available in the library. E Books and journal access are ideal especially for home research, but a Library must have recent international books and journals available on site. According to interviews with academic staff, especially those with higher level of education, existing online library resources (prescribed article and books databases) are suboptimal. It was noted by the Expert group that most of the course descriptions refer to old edition books that no longer respond to modern science and clinical practice.
5) Research methodologies will be more comprehensive if different or combined methodologies are given equal weight. Students are to be encouraged to carry out research in topics of their own personal interest and not as a part researcher in a member of Staff's research:
The Self Assessment Document mentions a number of research projects with different titles, the Expert Group have not verified whether students actually chose these titles themselves.
6) Additional resources for the purpose of equipment and apparatus to help improve research:
The Health Care Centre in Sports has definitely met this recommendation.
7) LASE must continue to co-operate with international-level sports physiotherapists or international professional sports associations:
This recommendation has been partly adhered to as it states that during the five year period since the last review two foreign sports physiotherapists have cooperated with LASE. The Experts Group must bring to the attention of the reader that ENPHE is a European Network for physiotherapists in higher education to meet and get to know each other. It does not organise seminars or conferences that are educational in manner. The aim of the recommendation was to get the Staff at LASE to participate in foreign exchanges to become accustomed with different possibly more modern sport treatment techniques. Joining a professional sports association like the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists who are interested in and or work in Sports & Exercise Medicine (SEM).
8) Internationalisation must be continued to allow students to gain a more versatile understanding of the professions physiotherapy, sports science and APA:
Unfortunately due to a number of circumstances including Covid this recommendation has not been totally adhered to. The numbers of both incoming and outgoing students has decreased, target numbers set by LASE have not been achieved and the numbers of visiting lecturers has also decreased substantially.
9) Cooperation with other Latvian Libraries, Universities and Colleges should be established thus ensuring the sharing of material and technical support and resources:
The recommendation was to commence some sort of agreements to enhance the library facilities and to help LASE to acquire the basic apparatus and equipment necessary to be able to teach the necessary skills required to get the students proficient in these skills prior to going out into the clinical sites.
The related appendix and reply to this recommendation (on page 36) states how agreements have been done with other universities, but some of these are in Ukraine and Belarus.
10) All the theses have to have a summary in the English language:
According to Appendix_3_Recommendations page 37, this recommendation has been adhered to.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
There appear to be very little response to the recommendations that were suggested in the previous reviewing session regarding improvement of the undergraduate study programme.
The academy has done a limited amount of work to improve the study process quality and study programme content as recommended. These together with research methodology and student centred learning being the most prominent examples of the ignored recommendations.
While significant investments have been made in research laboratories, there is no evidence of fresh investment in teaching facilities. The investments made are not significant or sufficient for the existing number of students.
International cooperation has been taking place before the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has gone into recession ever since.
The management of LASE have failed to act effectively against the long lasting programme - student dropout.
The LASE infrastructure still is only partially accessible to persons with movement disabilities.
With reference to the recommendations on pages 58 and 59, out of a total of ten recommendations those numbered 1, 5, 6 and 10 have been implemented; 7, 8, and 9 have been partially implemented; 2, 3, and 4 that are crucial for a high standard of academic and skillful professional practitioners need a lot of attention.

Strengths:
1. The major positive change is the setting up of a new Research Centre that will benefit the Staff and Masters Students should they wish to carry out any research that requires the apparatus situated there.
2. Attempts have been made to recruit foreign staff to inject different ideas and concepts.

Weaknesses:
1. There has been no attempt to modernise the Study Programme into related Modules that can help students to understand and appreciate the learning of the related professions.
2. It was recommended that the Library was to be furnished with modern books and journals, this has not happened.
3. The Internationalisation and cooperation between LASE and the rest of the Institutions that have signed agreements with them are still in their infancy.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

1 R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Following the previous review the basic recommendations have been adhered to, while the major recommendations: Teaching Resources, Internationalisation, the Library and the Study Programme have had either very little or no evidence of action at all.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

1) A more detailed explanation of the transition from the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport to an AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport by LASE should be made available to the public.

2) To commence a student Reflective Portfolio that gives the opportunity for a student to reflect his academic journey at LASE.
3) The immediate recommendation is that LASE reviews the previous recommendations and commences a strategy to implement the changes that have been identified and recommended previously and again following this assessment. These are to: All teaching of Physiotherapy skills, techniques, apparatus and clinical treatment skills have to be taught by Academy staff within the Academy itself.
4) To prepare a Curriculum Development Team to review the present Study Programme and to change the present programme into a more cohort, modern, spiral curriculum.
5) To restock the Library with books and journals that the new course programme demands and requires, thus helping the students to facilitate their learning.
6) To set up an Internationalisation Team, with an identified person who will become the image and contact person for LASE not only locally but on the web, to research the present situation and why the present strategy is not working.
7) To refurbish the environment to be safer and more user friendly: emergency lighting, a non-slip entrance to the buildings, broken tiles, possibly a second lift in case one is being serviced or requires repairs.
8) To create a unified Internal quality assurance system model combining all fragmented regulations and policies thus making it easy to follow and percept.
9) Reevaluate all the quality assurance plans and to make necessary ones following these principles - define quality criteria according to SMART principle, define indicators describing the degree of accomplishment for every quality criteria thus allowing the responsible actors to measure actual progress and identify drawbacks.
10) Develop separate regulation regarding submission of student suggestions and complaints not only regarding study results evaluation; Include opportunity to submit anonymous complaints. Make a connection to already existing regulations and policies.
11) Include various quantitative data in the quality assurance system - data from professional associations, routinely collected data from LASE, data from government human resources analysis etc.
12) Invest in information technologies and its implementation in study process - make the system faster thus promoting academic staff to use it more both in a quantitative and qualitative way.
13) It is being recommended that LASE records at least 75% of all lectures and practical sessions thus being available for students to aid in their learning and revision of skills.
14) Include the health care field in the research policy and strategy, defining clear research priorities.
15) Revise division of workload of the academic staff for them to be able to rest (and provide high quality of work) and to be able to work on their scientific research.
16) To provide additional support (education and financial support) for the academic staff related to research and publishing.

17) A more detailed explanation of the transition from PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport to AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport by LASE would be desirable when defining the first aim of the study field.

Long-term recommendations

1) To introduce the new Academic Masters Programme once the present shortcomings have been or are being attended to, in the shortest time possible.
2) To commence a Clinical Supervisors Course.
3) To build or convert new Laboratories in order that all the practical, manual and clinical skills are taught on site.
4) To develop and implement a strategy to raise finances (through attracting international students) in order to be able to provide the highest quality of studies possible.
5) To provide at least a draft version of the development plan for the study field Health Care.
6) To provide a description of the function of the Internal Quality Assurance Centre and the role of students in the quality assurance of study programs.
7) To make the web page of LASE more user friendly - make all the policies and regulations available and recognisable, easy to find; make the web design up to date with global tendencies to give a visitor an impression of modernity and keeping up with the world pulse.
8) To implement research based study principles to stimulate all level student interest into research; to follow this recommendation, invest in training of academic staff (both elected and invited) to be able to implement this approach and reorganise study courses thus requiring students to do more research as a part of their studies.
9) To prepare the IT system for simulation based learning - both technology and skill wise.
10) To establish mechanisms for research support - consultations and training for grant application, training and funding for publications in high impact journals, data analysis laboratory consulting both academic staff and students regarding quantitative data analysis.
11) For further development it is recommended to review the opportunity to use LASE’s experience and expertise to organise and be the founding member for a Joint European Masters at Professional or Academic level.

II - "Physiotherapy" ASSESSMENT

II - "Physiotherapy" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The inclusion of PBSP Physiotherapy in the study field Health Care is justified and follows the aim of the given study programme, the learning outcomes to be achieved, the content of the programme and the degree and qualification to be awarded.

2.1.2. The PBSP Physiotherapy is a professional bachelor study programme and its amount is 160

Latvian credits (CP). The languages of instruction – Latvian and English. The degree to be acquired – professional bachelor's degree in health care and the qualification to be obtained – physiotherapist.
The course in Latvian, the PBSP Physiotherapy is implemented in two ways:
● full-time studies (4 years),
● part-time studies (4 years, 6 months).
The course In English, the PBSP Physiotherapy is implemented in two ways:
● full-time studies (4 years),
● part-time studies (4 years, 6 months).
The scope and duration of the study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia Regulations No. 512 "Regulations on the State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education", Point 8. and the Law on Higher Education Institutions Section 1., Points 9, 10 (https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Law-on-Higher-Education-Institutions_.pdf). The language of implementation of the study programme complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions Section 56. Point 3, Sub-point 1. (https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Law-on-Higher-Education-Institutions_.pdf).
Likewise, there is no justification why the PBSP Physiotherapy is offered also in English if in the SAR (SAR, p. 89) it is stated: "Considering the current geopolitical situation and, consequently, the decrease in the interest of foreign applicants, LSPA does not plan to implement variants of the study program in English in the near future."
The code of the study programme according to the classification of Latvian education – 42722, where the first part 42 of the code indicates that the type of the PBSP Physiotherapy is professional higher education programme (fifth level professional qualification and professional bachelor's degree) and the digits of the second part of the code 722 indicate that the thematic area of education is Health Care, but the group of educational programmes is Medical Services, which includes "Physiotherapy" (if the sixth and seventh digits of the code were specified for the study programme, then for Physiotherapy, without indicating the first two digits, the code would be 722 04 (the Cabinet Regulations No. 322, approved in Riga on June 13, 2017. "Regulations on the Classification of the Latvian Education. Annex 4).
The aims of the PBSP Physiotherapy (".. to provide professional studies in the field of rehabilitation corresponding to the economic and social needs of Latvia, providing it with qualified and professionally trained physiotherapy specialists, in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia Regulations No. 512 "Regulations on the State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education" and the Physiotherapist Professional Standard" (SAR, p. 82)) is focused only on the preparation of qualified specialists for the Latvian market, despite the fact that the programme is also offered in English. Study Program goals and tasks are formulated very generally and refers to the requirements in the regulatory documentation and are not specified by LASE itself. It will be better if the HEI formulates their own unique aims according to the regulations.
The aim and objectives of the PBSP Physiotherapy (SAR, p. 82) ("The main task of the Professional Bachelor's study programme is to ensure the achievement of the study results of the set of knowledge, skills and competencies in accordance with the knowledge, skills and competencies of the Level 6 of the framework specified in the Latvian education classification and the "Physiotherapist Professional Standard" (SAR, p. 82))" are almost identical and therefore it can be concluded that the wording of the objectives prevents from understanding how the aim of the programme will be achieved.
The study results (learning outcomes) of the bachelor's study programme (SAR, p. 82) correspond to the 6th level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), which is described in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 322 "Regulations on the Classification of Education in Latvia" (June 13, 2017). However, it would be desirable to indicate exactly what the acquired knowledge, skills, and competence are in the study results.

In SAR (p. 83, 84) it is stated, that the Admission requirements for studies in the Latvian language are Secondary education, but for studies in English – Secondary education, B2 level of English. At the same time, it is indicated in SAR (p. 89), that "Admission requirements include a requirement for a centralised examination in biology, which ensures the further acquisition of the professional qualification." It is not specified whether the centralised examination in Biology is a requirement only for studies in Latvian or whether it is necessary in case of applicants who intend to study in English. LASE website (https://www.lspa.lv/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=265:professional-bachelor-higher-education-programme-qphysiotherapyq&catid=220:programs&Itemid=2) states that additional points are awarded for the centralized examination in Biology; thus it is not a mandatory requirement.
It is necessary for LASE to clarify the admission requirements for the PBSP Physiotherapy in the SAR.
The name, aim and learning outcomes of the study programme, as well as the qualification to be obtained after completing the programme comply with the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 512 "Regulations on the State Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education", the Cabinet Regulations No. 322 "Regulations on the Classification of the Latvian Education" and the Physiotherapist Professional Standard and are interrelated.
However, the objectives of the PBSP Physiotherapy do not correspond to the aim of the programme and it is necessary to clarify the admission requirements.

2.1.3. According to the Self-Assessment Report (SAR, paragraph 3.1.1., pp. 85 – 88), changes have been introduced only in relation to the study courses of the PBSP Physiotherapy:
● the amount of contact hours of study courses (9 study courses) was increased starting from the study year 2019/2020, taking into account the information provided by students and tutors on the need to increase the amount of contact hours;
● since the study year 2019/2020, new optional study courses were developed and included in the programme;
● due to the emergency situation caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, starting from 2020, the study schedules were changed, taking into account the established epidemiological situation in the country;
● changes have been made in the order of study courses (10 study courses) in the content of the programme, taking into account the Physiotherapist Professional Standard (13.10.2021) and previously the accreditation commission reprimanded that the study programme also had several study courses in the field of sports and study courses in the amount of 1 CP, thus, changes are still planned to be introduced in the study year 2022/2023;
● In 15 study courses (SAR, p. 86 - 87), the changes are either related to the integration of certain study courses or the course is transformed into a new study course, thus reducing the number of study courses, the volume of which is 1 CP, and, accordingly, balancing the student load.

The descriptions of the study courses were supplemented with the skills, competencies and knowledge to be acquired in the study results, so that the study programme would be improved and acquired according to the "Physiotherapist Professional Standard". The corrections introduced in the study courses have been analysed, they are justified and will be supported.

2.1.4. The appendix (Appendix_3.1.4_1.Statistic_date.docx) presents the dynamics in the number of students of full-time and part-time studies in the PBSP Physiotherapy in the period 2016 – 2021, - 774 students have been enrolled in both full-time (442) and part-time (332) studies for private funding. Only one foreign student has studied at the PBSP Physiotherapy in English in the period of study years 2017/2018 - 2020/2021. The number of students indicates that the programme is in demand both in full-time and part-time studies, but it is not in demand among foreign students.

Evaluating the number of students who have graduated from the Professional Bachelor's study programme "Physiotherapy" during the reporting period, there were 216 full-time students and 99 part-time students – the total number is 315 students. Student dropout is more than half of the number of matriculated students and it is the largest during the 1st year of studies. The large dropout of the LASE students is explained by the students' inability to independently acquire theoretical knowledge in such a large amount as required by study courses in Anatomy and Physiology and irregular attendance of classes.

The appendix (Appendix_3.1.4_1.Statistic_date.docx) presents the dynamics in the number of graduates of full-time and part-time studies in the PBSP Physiotherapy in the period 2016 – 2021, which is 315 graduates in six years. Unfortunately, SAR (SAR, p. 90 - 91) does not provide the statistics on the employment of graduates, neither does it indicate their places of employment. According to the SAR, the information provided by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2021 about "the employment of the LASE graduates in the field of "Health Care" demonstrates that almost 60% of graduates were employed in the field of health and social care, 9% in the field of education, 5% in the field of recreation, 3% in the state administration, 9% in the wholesale sector. Only 3.2% were unemployed, which is lower than the average of 3.4% in state higher education institutions".
The dynamics in the number of graduates and employment indicators of the graduates of the PBSP Physiotherapy in the period 2016–2021 shows that the study programme is economically and socially justified. Although during the interview with the employers, it was mentioned that graduates fail or do not pass the Latvian Physiotherapist Association Certification Exam, therefore it is necessary to determine the reasons why this issue is taking place and eliminate them. This will require further cooperation with all the included stakeholders.

2.1.5. N/A

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
The name, aim and learning outcomes of the study programme, as well as the qualification to be obtained after completing the programme comply with the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 512 "Regulations on the State Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education", the Cabinet Regulations No. 322 "Regulations on the Classification of the Latvian Education and the Physiotherapist Professional Standard and are interrelated.
The objectives of the PBSP Physiotherapy do not correspond to the aim of the programme.
The Report does not provide any justification as to why the PBSP Physiotherapy is also offered in English.
The corrections introduced in the study courses are analysed, justified and shall be supported.
The dynamics in the number of graduates and employment indicators of the graduates of the PBSP Physiotherapy in the period 2016–2021 testify to the fact that the study programme is economically and socially justified.

Strengths:
1. The name, aim and learning outcomes of the study programme, as well as the qualification to be obtained after completing the programme comply with the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 512 "Regulations on the
2. State Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education", the Cabinet Regulations No. 322 "Regulations on the Classification of the Latvian Education" and the Physiotherapist Professional Standard and are interrelated.

3. The dynamics in the number of graduates and employment indicators of the graduates of the PBSP Physiotherapy in the period 2016–2021 testify to the fact that the study programme is economically and socially justified.

Weaknesses:
1. The objectives of the PBSP Physiotherapy do not correspond to the aims of the programme.
2. There appears to be some discrepancies regarding the 'Entry Requirements' to the course, these ought to be consistent and very clearly presented.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The content of the study-programme and its implementation does comply with the national state regulations and gives the graduate the chance to apply for professional qualification requirements to practise the profession as can be viewed in the Annex Information on the Higher Education Institution. The study programme complies with the national regulations, that require inclusion of competencies described in Environmental protection law and Civil protection law (see Study course “Environmental sciences - Civil protection and ecology”). This study course matches the minimal requirements regarding the study course amount (1 CP=1.5 ECTS) and content. According to the study programme SAR (3.2.1.) “During the study of the bachelor's program, the student develops and defends at least three study papers, followed by the Bachelor's thesis”. According to the Appendix 3.2.1_5.Descriptions, these papers are produced in study courses Term Paper I, Term Paper II and Term Paper III. The Expert group would like to turn the attention to the fact that, despite having the licence to implement this study programme in English, it is not happening and study courses regarding Latvian language are not included in study course plans. However this study programme is now starting to look old fashioned, is not attractive and does not do justice to the Academy and the staff a quick look at the ethos behind the physiotherapy courses around Europe can quickly make this statement easily understandable (//utbildning.ki.se/programme-syllabus/1FY14). (https://www.tcd.ie/courses/undergraduate/courses/physiotherapy), (https://www.brighton.ac.uk/courses/study/physiotherapy-bsc-hons.aspx).
The content of the study programme of the Professional Bachelor higher education "Physiotherapy" is still based on the medical model of education and has not grouped related subjects together to make learning easier and more understandable. This is not a case of amalgamating study-units to round up ECTS but a situation where experts in curriculum design within the field, group subjects together that will form a spiral curriculum starting with easier subjects, blending and being more relevant with more difficult ones at the appropriate stage of the course. For example, to be more pertinent, a graduate told the Expert Group how when she was a student she did not understand why accountancy was being taught in the first year of the course, she also suggested that this ought to be taught by a physiotherapist working privately who can explain the needs of accountancy skills to a newly qualified physiotherapist. Taking this in mind and referring to the recommendations offered in the previous review of the LASE it might be advisable to amalgamate the study units: Basics of Law, Public Health and Hygiene, Project Management, Accountancy and possibly including market opportunities, creating a Business Plan and Ethics into one Module titled "Entrepreneurship" and offer this towards the end of the course to prepare the new graduates for the challenges of a working life ahead of them.
If the designers of the course could amalgamate the concerning Anatomy, together with the related Dynamic Anatomy, to the related Physiology, to the related Pathologies and Sporting Injuries and then to the Physiotherapy skills and Rehabilitation and calling this module "Musculoskeletal Injuries in Sports" in the opinion of the Experts Group, together with a more dynamic teaching and learning

methodology might get students geared towards individual learners, more research oriented and might decrease the dropout situation that has plagued LASE for the last number of years.
The Experts Group notes that the Academy states in its self-assessment report, "Study courses "Normal Physiology" (2 CP) and "Biology, Microbiology, Virology and Parasitology" (1 CP), "Age-Specific Physiology" (1 CP) and "Pathological Physiology" (2 CP) are combined in the study course "Human Physiology" (6CP)". It seems that the courses have been mechanically combined and the sections of the description are not logically arranged and do not seem to be interconnected. In the "Goals of Study Course Implementation" of the "Human Physiology" course, we read that it "provides an opportunity to take a course in normal physiology, developing the understanding of future health care professionals on the functions of organ systems and their regulation mechanisms in the human body. To provide the knowledge base necessary for the acquisition of other medical-biological cycle study courses". However, the results describe that the students "Acquired theoretical knowledge in biology, microbiology, virology and parasitology, as necessary, to be used when developing and defending term papers, Bachelor's Thesis and taking state examinations", in the same section we see the entry "Pathogenesis. Stages of disease development, characteristics, treatment principles. Immunology. Reactivity. Allergies: endogenous, exogenous reactions. Shock organ, manifestations of autoimmune diseases. Allergology, immunology. General circulatory disorders. Local circulatory disorders". Considering all the above it certainly goes beyond the goal and objectives of a normal physiology course. Moreover, it does not fit under the name of "Human physiology". It is necessary for the institution to pay more attention to the development of logical content and interrelationships between sections when creating course descriptions.
The Expert group also noted that in the description of the course "Dynamic Anatomy" it is indicated that volume of the course in Credits is as follows: 4.0 CP/6.0 ECTS (starting from the 2022/2023 academic year); 3.0 CP (up to and including the 2021/2022 academic year). However, in Appendix 3.2.1_4 "Planning of the full-time study program "Physiotherapy" until 2024./2025" (for students who have started their studies now) we see that the course remains 3 credits, not 4 credits.
The Employers, the Graduates and the Students all commented that they would like to have certain 'Basic Subjects' including Biomechanics, Physiology and Anatomy in greater depth. This point is interesting as the Management and Head of Department and the Self Assessment Document all state that one of the causes of the dropout rate amongst first year students is anatomy as this is perceived as being of a too high standard for the new incoming students. The question rises - what is the solution here? The academy has to increase the admission requirements for more capable students to take up the studies. The academy has to change the way these basic competencies are taught. The academy has to work on changing the overall image of the institution - from one where learning is easy and students can simultaneously combine studies with work to one where study process or "full time job" to which students devote all their time. Most probably it is the combination of all these factors - increasing the acceptance criteria, adjusting teaching process and stimulating the students to use existing study funding mechanisms already described in LASE web page (https://lspa.eu/files/2020/Krediti.pdf and https://lspa.eu/files/2020/Studentu_kreditesana_2020.01.10.pdf).
The Study Programme is still composed of study units with an ECTS value of 0.75, 1.5, 2.25 etc., for example "History of medicine", "Documentation" - both 0,5 CP, "Informatics", "Public health, hygiene", "Terminology in foreign language", "Kinesiology" - all 1,5 CP (Appendix_3.2.1_4.Full_time_appendix). This hotchpotch of low value credits will give a prospective student or academic reviewing this course programme that there are subjects that are not being given in enough detail to warrant being on a University Undergraduate Degree, as recommended previously collect all these minor subjects and include them in a related module. It is also being recommended to review the weighting of certain subjects, for example Medical Terminology has the same academic weight of 1.5 ECTS as General Surgery.
Physiotherapy in Neurology 12 ECTS while Physiotherapy in Sport is 3 ECTS - this is after the Expert

group were repeatedly told that the treatment of sports is one of the highlights for attracting incoming students to LASE. One would have expected a reversal of ECTS to reflect the Academy's association with Sports.
Besides what has already been said, the Expert group would like to draw attention to some issues regarding the order of study courses in study plan. What has already been mentioned is hardship students meet while engaging with entrepreneurship related subjects early on in their studies (Appendix 3.2.1._4. Study Plan_ 2022.2023). It makes no sense for students to learn Basics of business in health care, Project development and Basics of Law during their first study year, when predominantly the largest part of them are only getting familiar with their future profession. In Expert group opinion the basic knowledge necessary for ethical, effective and efficient learning process should be provided by rest of the study courses already planned in the first study year i.e. Introduction to the Specialty. Basics of Health Care and Organization and Basics of Philosophy and Ethics.
It also makes no sense to teach basics of pharmacology in the first study year, first semester, before students have finished a full study course of biochemistry or physiology. The knowledge of pharmacology principles will be necessary at the moment when students begin their clinical internships. It makes sense to teach pharmacology either at the beginning of the third study year or as a part of clinical courses.
There are some peculiarities regarding study programme content (Appendix.3.2.1_5.Descriptions). For example, it is beyond the Expert group "why is speech and language therapy a part of a paediatrics course in A part". Speech and language therapy is a completely different profession whose competences in diagnostics and treatment of speech and language disorders are way out of the scope of physiotherapy. This fact goes against the presumption that the study programme completely complies with the professional standard.
Another peculiarity is the opportunity of students to choose self-defence as a free of choice study course in physiotherapy undergraduate studies in first year. While the Expert group appreciates the creativeness of the Academy in this matter, it can not imagine how these skills complies with contemporary philosophy and understanding of the role of physiotherapy in health care. Even in the field of psychiatry, where occasions of patient violent behaviour is sometimes observable, physical confrontation of patients is not the rule of thumb for any health care professional. In the opinion of the Expert group the self-defence does not match the study field and should be replaced by another study course i.e. some specific health technology like taping or other competencies like python software engineering for data analysis.
There are still occasions when study outcomes in the course description are vaguely defined, the outcome description has not been tied to any well accepted taxonomy (i.e. Bloom's taxonomy or SOLO taxonomy). For example, in the study course "Basics of Paediatrics and Speech Therapy (starting from the 2024/2025 academic year)" there are study outcomes defined as follows: "acquired theoretical knowledge and skills about the physiological processes and regularities of children's growth and development, about the assessment of the psychomotor development of the infant period, about the most common infectious diseases in children, about the anatomically-functional development of the sensory organs, about congenital and acquired health disorders, about the peculiarities and pathological conditions of the cardiovascular and respiratory system, digestive tract, nervous system, bone-muscle and connective tissues system in children; to understand professional ethics when applying the evaluation of speech and language disorders to a patient;" Keeping this type of approach to study outcome setting not only impedes students from uptaking active role through assessing their own study results, but makes work for academic staff more complicated as it is much more difficult to organise student evaluation according to vaguely defined study outcomes.
Some of the students complained that they were not given the chance to practise or observe some of the techniques that they have heard about in physiotherapy rehabilitation, a case in point was the

1 theory lecture in 'Hydrotherapy'. The Experts group are of the opinion that should a hydrotherapy pool be available at the LASE, then this study unit could be taught in house, if not then a LASE member of Staff can teach the theory and practical classes associated with this study-unit in a site that has the appropriate amenities.
The Expert Group would also like to point out that there is a discrepancy between the study programme made available to the Group in the SAR and that visible on the official LASE website regarding the study programme director. At the AIKA e-platform, it is mentioned that a study programme is being executed both in Latvian and English, but in the LASE web page it is stated that no applications are being accepted for studies in English.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. The Institution does not have a policy regarding teaching methodology, this is dependent on the individual staff concerned. The Expert Group appreciates creativity amongst staff but is suggesting that LASE can possibly commence to specify a possible ratio between theoretical and practical components within a study-unit. The Expert Group would like to see more interactive teaching like Problem Based Learning that can develop research interest leading to possible life long learning. An example was given by a member of staff who used social media to get her teaching across during the coronavirus lock down and had excellent remarks and feedback from the students. Meanwhile, it seems that due to the lack of clear, unified strategy on teaching methodology, academic staff struggles with understanding of pedagogical terminology. During the onsite interviews the examples of implementation of student centred learning given by academic staff was questionable. The state and quality of the Moodle system hinders the existing efforts by individual educators.
At the same time reflection as a teaching/learning method, despite being recommended previously, has not been routinely used by LASE academic staff. During the interviews students and graduates struggled to remember instances when they had been asked to reflect upon their learning activities. Respondents kept on referring to study course quality evaluation surveys they had been asked to participate in after each study course. Without cultivating the practice of reflection about one's own actions, it is extremely hard to master necessary clinical reasoning skills.
The Study Programme does not appear to give enough emphasis to the learning, either theoretical or practical, of the many electrotherapeutic modalities available for professional physiotherapists to enhance their treatment regimes. It does not state where the teaching is to take place, whether students are going to be shown a demonstration of its use or whether students will be given the option to choose the most appropriate modality and practise. The programme has to differentiate between: theory, demonstration, practise on models or other students and finally clinical practice in a clinical site on real patients.
The Expert Group would like to commend the use of Moodle by the Institution and it is being recommended to move away from in-person lecturing to pre-recorded lectures, that way giving students more opportunities to learn on their own pace and time simultaneously giving away more responsibilities for the studies outcomes.

2.2.4. The Study Programme indicates that students undertaking this course must have five compulsory clinical components in Neurology, Paediatrics, Internal Medicine, Sport and Musculoskeletal, the previous Experts recommendations were that this is not enough and will be very difficult for the students to obtain registration and recognition in a number of European countries. This Study Programme does not prepare future healthcare professionals in the clinical practice field with some of the most common health conditions like Care of Post Coronavirus Respiratory conditions, Post Cardiac Surgery, Intensive Care, Pain management or pays inadequately small attention to some of the future challenges like care of the elderly, obesity,

cardiorespiratory diseases, rheumatology etc. During the interview with employers as a strength of LASE graduates was mentioned their skills and initiative in leading group based therapy sessions. At the same time, employers have noticed that LASE graduates are reluctant to work with infants.
The students, graduates, Staff, and Clinical site Managers also informed the Expert Group that students occasionally acquire the practical skills to learn certain techniques and treat patients while on clinical placement by the Clinical Supervisors looking after their students. One has to emphasise that these are Clinical Supervisors and not Clinical Educators - their role is to ensure that students can treat patients safely and efficiently not to teach them any skills. This practice can only lead to confusion as it is impossible for one clinical supervisor in one placement to teach all the students, hence students are taught by different members of staff, with different qualifications, within different clinical settings and sites. How can LASE be in a position “to standardise what is being taught”. Quality assurance “Professional integrity”. And eventually this will reflect the health of the Latvian population. Already, according to statements by representative of the Association of Latvian Physiotherapists made during the interview, LASE graduates struggle to pass the certification exam. While the results in these exams are worrisome in general, LASE graduates tend to perform worse than graduates of RSU or foreign universities. The recommendation being as has been stated by the previous Experts Group and this present Group of Experts all teaching of practical and clinical skills has to be taught by LASE staff within the LASE complex then on completion and successful assessment allowed to go to a clinical site treating real patients.
The Experts Group expressed its concern that the students from LASE attending clinical placements were not familiar with the reporting of any accident regimes, there appears to be no professional indemnity insurance for the students and clinical supervisors. This will have to be taken seriously especially if incoming or outgoing students are to attend LASE for theoretical, practical or clinical exchanges.
It was suggested by some of the stakeholders and being recommended by this Expert Group that going out on to the clinical sites be commenced in the first year of the course even on an observatory basis, this will immensely increase the interest of students and gives them the ability to start to relate what is being taught either verbally or by books what conditions and patients really are like.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. The expert group had a limited time to familiarise themselves with the final thesis of study programme physiotherapy graduates. During the preparation period of joint opinion the online library database of LASE was not available due to some technical issue (Server error 403 - forbidden access), restraining the group from extended research into the topic of thesis. The Academy has chosen relevant final thesis examples to include in SAR i.e. “Possibilities of Using Virtual Reality to Improve Lower Extremity Motor Function in Children With Cerebral Palsy”, “Analysis of the Work Abilities and the Level of Physical Activity for the Participants with Type 2 Diabetes of the Indirect Supervision Individually Adapted Extended Interval Walking Training Group of the Project “Walk Healthy”” or Studies on the Effect of Active Deep Torso Muscle Stability on Cognitive Abilities and Parameters Influencing the Risk of Falling in the Elderly Past 65 Years”. From examples mentioned in the SAR and from what was witnessed during the onsite visit, the topics of students' final theses are relevant and matches the study programme.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
The enthusiasm and dedication of some of the Staff is admirable. The use of Moodle has made the implementation of the study programme more manageable, but imagine the advantage of the

Lecturer who carries out 40 hours of lecturing per week, how much time could be released to that member of staff should her lectures be recorded and offered on Moodle in the future.
The Study Programme can still be viewed as a number of unrelated study units offered to students over a period of years (like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle). Then expecting these students to amalgamate these subjects together on their own (finishing the puzzle), and using this knowledge to diagnose, treat, sometimes refer patients, and finally discharge from treatment. Most modern physiotherapy study programmes have moved on to a spiral curriculum in modular fashion allowing students to grasp the most basic knowledge initially and building on this knowledge to become competent professionals and lifelong learners.
The study outcomes are defined with a wide variety of approaches, only in few cases matching the principles of world wide accepted taxonomies.
There seem to be no vision and initiative of LASE to move closer to modern teaching and learning approaches. While academic staff show innovative and proactive spirit, they seem to struggle with pedagogical terminology. LASE has failed to implement active learning tools as recommended by the previous Expert group.
Supervised Clinical Practice in a physiotherapy course is normally of around a thousand hours duration. There is no justification why students are not being exposed and getting clinical experience (and in LASEs case the necessary skills to treat patients) with other than the five compulsory rotations that the Academy offers.
The clinical component of the course is supervised by members of staff of the site where the students have been assigned to. It was unclear to the Expert Group whether LASE is actually involved in the selection of Clinical Supervisors or whether this fell under the duties of the Manager of the Clinical site. Apart from the academic qualifications of the clinical supervisors not being made accessible to the Expert group, some of these were actually carrying out Clinical Education not just supervision and the group was informed of a case where one of the supervisors only had two years experience. A recommendation to this can be that LASE identifies potential Clinical Supervisors and offers them a postgraduate Clinical Supervisors course, or releases some of the staff registered to LASE to visit the sites and carry out the necessary teaching there.
LASE has to take on the responsibility to educate and train their students within the Academy, the practice of expecting the clinical sites to train students with a large chunk of the curriculum is unacceptable and dangerous. How can LASE maintain an academic standard of quality assurance if what is being taught is not done: inhouse, by different people, in different environments. The litigation nightmare that can follow is unimaginable. Should a student accidentally cause an accident to a patient who sues for damages. Who is responsible? The manager of the clinical site, the clinical supervisor, the student themselves, LASE as the Institution supposedly responsible for the training of the student, or the Ministry of Health? The recommendation being that LASE should consider a professional Indemnity Insurance policy for the staff and students.
The final theses by students seems to match the objectives of the study programme and study field.

Strengths:
1. The use of Moodle platform for organising the study process is a significant advantage.
2. Enthusiasm and professionalism of academic staff, both elected and invited, makes perfect conditions for implementation of a modern study process.

Weaknesses:
1. The outdated study programme makes learning fragmented and impedes with reaching the necessary modern competencies expected.
2. Students face clinical setting too late in their studies thus spending too much of their studies time without appropriate grounding in their future profession.
3. Too much of a student’s basic professional clinical skills instead of being trained in LASE under

predetermined conditions, are trained in clinical internships, thus diminishing chances of LASE to provide standardised, high quality study results.
4. Modern teaching and learning approaches are rarely observable in LASE.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. To ensure and achieve the learning outcomes and to try and achieve high quality education for the physiotherapy course a number of resources are necessary. These have been broken down by the Expert Group into:
HUMAN RESOURCES / STAFF
● Overall the Institution appears to have very high staffing levels with a very high staff to student ratio.
● All staff are qualified to meet the expectations to provide a high standard of education.
● There appears to be too many medical staff teaching on a physiotherapy course, it is being recommended to employ more part-time physiotherapists on the staff list who are experts/ or specialised in their fields.
● Staff expressed comments during the review that the staff distribution of work appears to be very disproportional with some staff doing 40 hours of contact teaching compared to others doing half that amount, with no financial incentive, yet still expected to correct work, prepare lectures and carry out research. These statements contradicts the Regulation of accounting the workload of academic staff (Akadēmiskā personāla darba laika uzskaites kārtība LSPA - downloadeble at LASE web page).
● Staff, especially the Part-time Staff, expressed a desire to be given more time, opportunity and financial support to carry out more research.
● Management has to continue to promote the Teaching of the English language.
● Management has to infuse motivational incentives to further the Staff's education both locally and overseas. The academy has established many institutions useful for this agenda (i.e. International collaboration centre, Professional development and Life Long Learning centre, Project management centre) and published various policies. It seems that coordination of all these departments and policy implementation quality control are the weak spots here.
● Staff expressed the idea to cooperate with other universities both local and foreign especially the Baltic States 'to get new ideas' regarding teaching and learning methodologies.
● The management has to continue to strive and try to attract overseas lecturers to infuse new and different ideas on how to rehabilitate different conditions and pathologies. The overseas experts could also be attracted to supervise implementation of student centred and research based study principles.
● There appears to be a lack of quality control and assurance of harmonisation in the level of Clinical Supervision/Education taking place. The manager of the site determines who the clinical supervisor for the student will be, not LASE. Some Clinical Supervisors have only got 2 years experience and are occupying this role.

● The Expert Group strongly recommends that LASE commences a number of CPD sessions for Clinical Supervisors ending with some form of certification.
● The Expert Group is also recommending that interested staff are given training and help in how to write and apply for professional applications to get EU grants and funding.
● The Expert Group is recommending that management introduces a system, possibly a 'whistle blowers system' for staff and especially students to provide feedback. Regarding Staff, this could be one of the ways that the management can improve on quality assurance of the course. While the Risk control regulation and policy have defined the mechanism for risk identification, risk analysis and control, the opportunity to submit anonymous suggestions/complaints is not included, which could deter some more insecure actors.
The Expert Group tends to be a bit hesitant to agree to the Management's statement that "Sports and Health combined are to be the goal of the educational policy of LASE". At undergraduate level one expects that a physiotherapist has the skills, competences and knowledge to treat most pathologies and conditions that in the past a physiotherapist can contribute to the health of an individual at birth till the unfortunate time of death. To emphasise Sport is almost postgraduate unless the Academy can commence to offer a system that the Dutch Physiotherapy Educational system offers, what they call a 'minor' which is an in depth study of any particular field, within the generic course. At the moment this seems to be impossible as it would go against the professional standard, yet the official online LASE site (https://www.lspa.lv/eng/files/students/booklets/LSPA_EN.pdf) states “Physiotherapist with specialization in Sports Field.”

LIBRARY
Having visited the Library the Expert Group has made the following observations, comments and recommendations:
● The Library is going to require a rather large investment to buy new books, buy more computer stations, and more in house journals. The number, quality and quantity of books available is not adequate to provide a quality education for the students attending this Academy. These were and again are the recommendations of this Expert Group.
● Last review that took place in 2017 recommended that at least one journal in English and any other professional journals in the local languages be made available, The Self Assessment Document states that this has taken place, yet when asked to be shown the journal called 'Physiotherapy' in English, this has never been ordered and is not available. According to LASE web page, section Library (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=100&Itemid=397), there were 13 subscribed newspapers and periodicals available in library in 2022 (Diena/Nedēļas Nogales Komplekts/; Sporta Avīze; Sports; Ilustrētā Pasaules Vēsture; Ilustrētā Zinātne; Annas Psiholoģija; Mans Mazais; Ko Ārsti Tev Nestāsta; Veselība; Doctus; Lase Journal Of Sport Science; Т. И П. Физической Кулътуры; Физическая Кулътура). Keeping in mind that that LASE is not dealing only with healthcare field, still it is shocking to find materials of dubious or even toxic content - a periodical Ko ārsti tev nestāsta (What doctors does not reveal you) - besides local medical and professional literature (Doctus, Lase Journal Of Sport Science). The Expert group presumes that those periodicals of popular science (Ilustrētā Pasaules Vēsture; Ilustrētā Zinātne) are for pure erudition purposes. The reason for topical, not peer reviewed health related periodicals being subscribed by LASE library (Annas Psiholoģija; Mans Mazais, Veselība) is beyond the Experts group.
● The Physiotherapy in Neurology Study unit (in Year 3 of the course) has an academic value of 12 ECTS in the current course programme, yet not even one copy for the physiotherapy treatment of this subject is available in the library. From visiting the library it is clear that sports is the dominant subject in the LASE and the field of health care is somewhat supplemental.
● There are 10 Computer stations in the Library, for a population of well over 300 students this is not adequate, one cannot depend on students carting their own laptops every day.

● The Expert Group is also recommending that a number of very old books, some dating back to the 1960s be removed from the shelves especially if they are in subjects that are still evolving, for example Psychology.
● The Expert Group is also recommending that only the best student thesis are available in the Library to prevent situations where students might be reading and quoting work of low quality.
● The academic staff and the study programme directors have expressed the opinion that databases subscribed by LASE library does not cover all professional and academic needs both of employees and students.
● A comment by a student regarding the Library could be taken as quite pertinent "I think the Library is quite good, I went there twice during my time at LASE".

TEACHING EQUIPMENT and APPARATUS
Following a number of meetings with the Management, Staff, Clinical Supervisors, Graduates, Students and a tour around the Academy, the Expert Group would like to present the following comments, observations and recommendations.
It is very evident that the Management has invested very heavily in a new Health Care in Sports Research Centre, however as the name implies this is a research centre that only a few students are going to benefit from. What is necessary and has been recommended in the past is a substantial investment in:
a) New teaching Laboratories or Halls/ Practical Rooms in which the teaching of all the Practical Skills, Exercises, Clinical Skills, Electrotherapeutic skills are taught within the Academy prior to any student being allowed to commence clinical practice in private and state hospitals or clinics.
b) The Academy is going to have to substantially invest in all the necessary equipment that a physiotherapist requires to be proficient in, prior to treating patients in the clinical settings. So for example: The need of enough clinical couches for students to be practising breathing exercises and any other respiratory rehabilitation, each student is encouraged to have their own stethoscope and their own Pulse-oximeters, if this is not the norm then the Teaching Institution in this case the Academy has to have enough available for students to learn with and practice. The Academy will also have to provide the students with Incentive Spirometers to encourage deep breathing exercises, have to have a number of Spirometers to show students how to evaluate and regulate their treatment sessions. The use of a Vitalograph displaying FEV1 or FVC can be highly educational for a student to recognise a restricted airways disease to an obstructive airway disease. Students will have to be proficient in the administration of Oxygen therapy, Nebulisers and at least be shown how to carry out sterile suction techniques and the use and nomenclature of ventilators. This is just an example of the apparatus and equipment one would expect an educational institution to have just to cover the subject of Respiratory Physiotherapy, only then can you expect the students and eventually graduates to have the confidence to work independently in private or state health centres. The health of the local and Latvian population in general, expects to have highly trained generic physiotherapists upon completion of their undergraduate training, one can no longer educate physiotherapists who are very lacking in the other generic basic skills.
As it has already been mentioned previously in this joint opinion, there seems to be lack of health care specific equipment onsite in LASE - medical equipment used in clinical settings crucial for learning clinical skills to be used in inpatient settings (physiotherapy in intensive care, chest physiotherapy, physiotherapy in cardiology, physiotherapy after abdominal, blood vessel or orthopaedic surgery) was absent. The expert group did see almost none of physical therapy equipment needed to teach application of various physical agents. A lack of contemporary patient transfer equipment makes one question the quality of the ergonomics study course and the competencies of future specialists to demand, lead and make significant work environment changes in their job placements. The Expert group finds basic teaching materials insufficient to effectively teach subjects like anatomy/dynamic anatomy, physiotherapy in orthopaedics (splints, casts,

orthoses, technical aids).
This sort of equipment and apparatus for the whole course programme is necessary if the Academy really expects to encourage more students both local and foreign to apply for the Physiotherapy course at LASE.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. FINANCIAL
The Expert Group found it extremely difficult to follow the financial costs for the study programme as stated on pages 103-104 of the SAR. The total costs for the course is not given, Total Staff expenses are not given, to work these out the SAR itself says that the figures are contradictory. To commence with the total study costs per student per year is given at Eur 2930 with a total cost for the programme at Eur 11720, in the next paragraph it states that according to publicly available information total study costs per student per year Eur 2820 with a total cost for the programme Eur 11280. If one visits the official site (https://www.lspa.lv/eng/files/students/booklets/LSPA_EN.pdf) then this varies again with stated tuition fees per year set at Eur 3200, thus full programme would cost Eur 12800. (A point to mention at this stage is that tuition fees for part time students is not available on the website), yet the SAR gives the value of Eur 2460 and Eur 11070 for the full programme. There is no explanation how they have come to these figures. Hence, for example if one reads in the SAR page 103 that 1 student contributes 15 Eur per year to buy textbooks one cannot work out accurately what the budget to buy books for the library really is or any other costing for that matter. Management stated that the full complement of students (yearly intake 90) is required to break even with costs hence, these figures are only accurate for year one of the course as in the second year and those following, if drop out rates occur then LASE is running at a loss, but again not mentioned in the SAR.
Every university globally always comments about the lack of available financial support, however the management appears to be doing very little to improve this situation. There has to be more use of the Academy itself to generate funding. The objective to attract more foreign students are stated in Latvian Academy of Sport Education DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY for 2015–2020 (https://lspa.eu/eng/files/2015/LASE_Strategy_2015_2020.pdf).
The Expert Group is recommending that foreign fee paying students be attracted to this Academy. There are student recruitment agencies that will provide the students, however, the Academy has to be in a position to improve the product and the process with further investment and then offer the courses at a profitable rate.
The Expert Group is also recommending that the Academy commences a series of Continuing Professional Education courses and seminars to local and possible foreign graduates or students who are willing to pay to further their education. So far the most Continuing Professional Education courses and seminars have been targeted at sports coaches (https://lspa.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=141&Itemid=243).
The Expert Group is also recommending that the premises themselves can also be generating funds - the renting of the available gymnasium to the public for professional or private use, the renting of auditoriums or lecture halls for private or commercial use.
The inclusion of commercial companies to sponsor a project/ student/ apparatus/the library/ or the university, a common practice taking place in a lot of major Universities overseas. The policy of conflict of interest control regarding this type of cooperation must be developed in advance.
The Expert Group thinks that it is time for the management to introduce Departmental Budgets and not have a centralised system. The Expert Group was made aware of the red tape necessary to order a number of books for example.
The Group of Experts is also recommending that staff are allotted a Work Resource Fund (even if

nominal) but this will give staff the initiative to spend this funding on the educational matters that are personal to each individual member of staff.
The Expert Group has noted and commends the infusion of funds for the setting up of a new Health Care in Sports Research Centre.
The Expert Group is recommending that a Senior member of Staff can research different Curricula offered by various universities throughout Europe and possibly attend such an Institution to get actually acquainted with the necessary equipment and apparatus necessary to teach physiotherapy.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Cnclusions
Highly qualified teaching staff that are loyal to their academy are the most prominent strengths of the LASE. The academy seems to have a lot of physical space (rooms) for teaching/learning to take place.
The most significant weakness of the LASE is inability to turn its existing resources into money. When the demographic situation locally is far from optimistic, one must look over the borders for potential students. To attract them and their money, LASE should have made not only strategic plans with no further actions, but have taken ambitious steps. Inability of management to see the actual value of teaching health care in the international market has put the whole academy on pause.
While one can talk indefinitely about the lack of finances, the question on how existing funds have been spent is worth attention. It makes no sense to make the academic staff with the most research potential to provide lectures and practical sessions. The Academy ought to help and encourage these academics to apply for research grants and earn additional money for LASE. A lot of money could be saved if all the lectures were recorded and academic staff, instead of spending time repeating the same knowledge delivery routines would work in research or innovations.
The question arises whether LASE has invested enough in efforts to keep every student. If the financial state is the leading problem for dropouts, what has LASE done to make all available tools work for students, to apply/receive study loans. If students rate their chances to repay loans unlikely, then the quality of their studies is being put to the test.
It is always nice to have a new and fancy research equipment but it doesn't help to attract the future students if there is no shiny, up to date teaching equipment in the field of health care. A lot of physiotherapy has to do with the human body, it is not enough to have new massage tables to learn all about physiotherapy - there must be clinical equipment as well. Simulation based learning demands investment in information technologies.
Evidence based practice comes not only from educators' experience but also from the latest scientific evidence. The content of the LASE library regarding the healthcare field is outrageous.

Strengths:
1. Human resources - devoted and highly qualified academic staff - is the most prominent strength of LASE resources.
2. Scientific laboratory has a great potential for teaching and learning both clinical and research skills.

Weaknesses:
1. Inability of LASE management to organise studies in English and attract foreign students, thus putting existing strengths in use and profiting, is serious weakness.
2. Library resources are outdated and in a insufficient quantity and quality.
3. Extremely limited medical devices onsite in LASE impedes with teaching and learning necessary clinical skills according to profession standard.

4. The auditing for LASE needs to be more vigorous and transparent.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The Staff and the new Research Centre can be seen as the positive aspects related to the compliance of the study provision, however Financial, Teaching Materials and the Methodology together with an inadequate Library bring this section very close to non-compliant.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. All the Teaching Staff at LASE are qualified and have the necessary qualifications to be members of staff at an institute of Higher Education. All Teaching Staff appeared to be highly motivated and expressed the desire to continue their educational levels further, but expressed time and finance as barriers to this taking place.
The Research Staff appeared very enthusiastic and expressed the willingness to help both students and staff to carry out any research in the new Research Centre.
The Staff expressed the desire to have more collaboration especially with other Baltic States to allow an exchange of ideas.
The Full-Time members of Staff contribute to 34% of all the lectures given during the course. The distribution of the numbers of teaching hours to the different staff could not be calculated; however during the on-site meeting carried out with the staff, it became apparent that this varied from below 20 to 40 hours a week of lecturing.

All Teaching Staff expressed the desire to have more time to be made available to them to carry out research.
Theory and Practical Teaching Staff:
* The initial assessment of this section is slightly confusing for the Experts Group to understand as there are differences in the staffing levels within the same Self Assessment Document. It is stated that there are 151 members of Staff for the BSC in Physiotherapy, made up of 22 Full-time members of staff on page 56 and 24 Full-time members of Staff on page 105. In the same manner on page 56 it states there are 63 Guest Teaching Staff and on page 105, 65 Guest Teaching Staff. Due to these discrepancies the number of Clinical Supervisory Staff must be either 62 or 64. A breakdown of this again appears to be different with 2 Leading Researchers and 2 Researchers on page 105 and 1 of each on page 56.
* Taking into consideration the high numbers of staff employed by LASE (24 Full-Time and 63 Guest Lecturers) results in a very high Staff to Student ratio. This works out at approximately 1:5 (For teaching Physiotherapy The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy in the United Kingdom recommends 1:15) in Higher Education the benchmark for excellence is 1:10. With such figures LASE should be offering an extremely high level of education, however the drop out rate from this course is still high and the Professional Examination that allows graduates to work post graduation is below the national average, not signs of excellency. Research into these two points must be carried out to tackle these issues.
Clinical Supervisors:
* It was difficult for the Expert Group to assess the levels of competence of these Clinical

Supervisors, however the Graduates and Staff spoke highly about them during the onsite meetings held.
* The Experts Group would like to recommend that newly qualified staff with only two years experience are not included as Clinical Supervisors.

2.4.2 In the staff information appendix (2.3.7_1.pielikums. Pamatinformācija par docētājiem), lecturers are indicated for courses that are not a separate part of the programme any more. For example, "Normal Physiology", "Pathological Physiology", "Metrology and medical statistics", "Basics of accounting" and others. Therefore, the Expert Group does not have the opportunity to really determine the workload of the lecturers and understand the involvement of the presented academic staff in the implementation of the programme.
There still appears to be a lack of full time Physiotherapy members of Staff contributing to this Physiotherapy Course. It is being recommended that LASE introduces a system to gradually employ more qualified physiotherapists replacing other non physiotherapy staff.
The Experts Group is recommending that LASE differentiates between Clinical Supervisors and Clinical Educators, and possibly recruits or releases some LASE staff to carry out on site Clinical Education.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. Each member of staff according to the SAR regularly increase their knowledge by attending lectures and seminars organised by various entities within the state of Latvia. They all have are involved in the publication of scientific papers, or presented papers and published books related to Health Care and are closely related to the Development Strategy of the Latvian Academy of Sport Education. Some of the research papers have been the cooperation of work between local and foreign universities or entities and this research helps to be incorporated into the study programme. Each member of staff is also encouraged to learn English and the Academy is offering help to achieve this goal, this in turn will help the staff to publish their research to a wider audience as well as helping LASE achieve internationalisation.

2.4.5. LASE has established a mechanism for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme. The staff is motivated for the successful implementation of the program, but developing this mechanism requires more effort, since the link between courses is not properly represented within the program and requires more work.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
The Academy should be very proud of the Staff complement. All Academic Staff, especially the full time, including the Research Staff appear to be highly motivated and dedicated to their work.
The Staff to the best of their abilities and taking into consideration the limitations present and the time available, carry out limited research that is occasionally published.
The fact that the high number of Staff to Student ratio has not borne the results expected regarding the amount and quality of research, nor has it tackled the large number of student dropouts, nor eased the financial situation can be viewed as a weakness that ought to be looked into at a deeper perspective.
Noted by the Expert Group regarding the teaching of a lot of the clinical and practical skills required by a physiotherapist are taught by clinicians working at different sites. It was unclear whether these are Clinical Supervisors or Clinical Educators? It appears that most of the teaching of clinical skills is taught at the clinical site by the Clinical Supervisors however since they are not LASE staff, the

quality of teaching, what is being taught and the standardisation between what is taught by the different staff leaves a lot of room for improvement.
Strengths:
1. All the staff (academic, research and administrative) appear to be very conscientious, hard working and dedicated to their work.

Weaknesses:
1. LASE teaches a limited amount of clinical skills necessary to practise the profession at the Academy but delegates this to the clinical staff working at the various sites. A detailed study programme ought to be made publicly available, including the teaching of the theoretical, practical and clinical skills. This should include what and where it is being taught.

2. Workload requires rationalization and result-oriented approach.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants is compliant with the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments. But the situation regarding the teaching taking place on the clinical site, compliance with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the quality of the Clinical education cannot be judged (most of the teaching of clinical skills is taught at the clinical site by the Clinical Supervisors however since they are not LASE staff).

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Professional Bachelor’s study programme “Physiotherapy” (42722) can be acquired in full-time and part-time studies. In accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia Regulations No. 512 “Regulations on the State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education” the volume of the study programme in both full-time and part-time studies, respectively, is 160 credit points.
General education courses (20 CP)
Theoretical basic courses of the field and information technology courses (36 CP)
Professional specialisation courses of the field (60 CP)
Elective study courses (6 CP)
Practice outside the educational institution (26 CP)
State Examinations (12 CP)

2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The LASE has provided the document in Annex (Competences_1.rar) presenting the evidence that the PBSP Physiotherapy complies with the PHYSIOTHERAPIST PROFESSIONAL STANDARD agreed upon at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Council for Vocational Educational and Employment on October 13, 2021, Minutes No. 6

3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study course description structured and:
1) defines the requirements for the commencement of the acquisition of the study course;
2) determines the aims for the implementation of the study course and the planned learning outcomes;
3) outlines the content of the study course necessary for the achievement of learning outcomes, contain the study course calendar, mandatory and supplementary literature, indicate other sources of information;
4) describe the organisation and tasks for the independent work of students;
5) determine the evaluation criteria of learning outcomes.
However, it should be noted that the interrelation between the information included in the study courses is not clear and there is no connection between study content and outcomes. E.g.
Course “Basics of Therapeutic Gymnastics”: In the “Planned Study Results” is mentioned that “understand professional ethics when applying therapeutic gymnastics to a patient” , “educate the patient about health promotion and disease prevention” but content of the course do’s not include relevant topics.
It is not clear why a student is awarded a point for attendance. The obligation to attend a certain percentage should be a requirement for admission to the final exam or a necessary criteria for completion the course, and not the “fact transformed to score (point)”.
e.g. course “Theory and Methodology of Acyclic Sports Training”
Attendance:
- 3 points – 100% attendance;
- 2 points – 75% attendance;
- 1 point – 50 % attendance
Or Evaluation Criteria in the Study Cycle Sports Games
Class attendance – 5 points;
- 5 points – 100% attendance;
- 3 points – 75% attendance;
- 1 point – 50 % attendance.
The sequence of the courses in the part-time study program need revision, some courses are postponed to the last semesters and outcomes of these courses are prerequisites of other courses which are in low semesters.

4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

A sample of the diploma and its supplement to be issued for completing the study programme is presented in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers 16.04.2013. to Regulation No. 202 "Procedures for Issuing State-Recognized Higher Education Certificates"

5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language (Latvian)

9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The LASE has provided the Annex (AIC coordinator added annexes. 2.3.7_1.pielikums. Pamatinformācija par docētajiem.xlsx) that provides the information about the lecturers' proficiency in the English language. The appendix shows that not all lecturers have at least a B2 level of English.
However, the LASE has not provided the Confirmation of the Head of the study field attesting that the teaching staff to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level English proficiency.

10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

LASE provided study agreement templates (which complies mandatory provisions, the subject and duties of the agreement between the Academy and the student are written in detail in the document).The sample of the study agreement is fully compliant with Section 46, Paragraph 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet Regulations No.70 as of 23.01.2007 “Mandatory regulations to be included in the study agreement”.

11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

LASE has provided confirmation (EXCERPT from the LASE Senate meeting PROTOCOL No. 6/2021-2022 on December 2, 2021) that “LASE will provide students of the Professional Bachelor’s study programme “Physiotherapy” (42722) with opportunities to continue their education in the LASE Professional Bachelor’s study programme “Sport Science” (42813) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated".
However, the degree and qualification to be obtained after completing the PBSP “Sports science”, namely, Professional Bachelor’s degree in Sports Science and Education and sports specialist with two qualifications is not the same as a Bachelor’s degree in Health Care and physiotherapist qualification.

12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme’s license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

LASE has provided confirmation (EXCERPT from the LASE Senate meeting PROTOCOL No. 6/2021-2022 on December 2, 2021) that LASE guarantees compensation for losses to the students of the Professional Bachelor’s study programme “Physiotherapy” (42722) if the study programme is not accredited due to actions of LASE or if the licence of the study programme is revoked and the student does not want to continue education in another study programme.

13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

PBSP Physiotherapy complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 268 "Regulations on the medical competence of medical practitioners and students who study 1st or 2nd level professional higher medical education programmes, and the amount of theoretical and practical knowledge of these persons" (March 24, 2009).

Assessment of the requirement [8]

1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The PBSP “Physiotherapy” (42722) mostly comply with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments, however, experts found some inconsistencies (more information above, under point 3, 9, 11), which LASE should eliminate in order to ensure full compliance of the program with the requirements contained in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

The major strength for this study programme and LASE in general are the Staff. The study programme itself has to be rejuvenated to achieve the aims of this course. A spiral curriculum with related study units in a modular fashion will instil a new approach to learning from the students perspective. The staff have to be more imaginative and move away from a lecturing system to a more blended learning, making better use of moodle and IT in general. The lack of teaching resources and equipment has probably caused LASE to outsource a lot of the practical and clinical teaching associated with the physiotherapy profession to the staff at clinical sites. This is unacceptable especially if one takes into consideration the amount of staff employed at the academy. The quality, content, manner of teaching of most of these skills cannot be harmonised and evaluated. It is normal safe practice that students learn the theory and practical skills well and efficiently, within the teaching institution, prior to going to a clinical site. The library is very poorly equipped with some books dating back to the 1960s. The expert Board could not find one foreign journal at hand, nor a book related to the treatment of neurological conditions, basic component of the physiotherapy course worth 12 ECTS. The above statements have all been recommended previously.

The above conclusions should make the reader aware that the Expert Group has a large number of reservations regarding the Bachelor programme of Physiotherapy with regard to the resources available for teaching and the teaching of practical and clinical skills.

Regarding the Physiotherapy course in English, the content appears to be similar to that carried out in Latvian, however the reservations regarding the teaching and learning resources will be amplified due to the language problems and the fact that even less books will be available in the library.

The Expert Group has not understood how the part time course requires a three times a week attendance yet only extends the course by six months. There are no details in the SAR how this affects the clinical training, education and practical components of the course.

It is the opinion of the Expert Group that the emphasis of this programme is sports rehabilitation, yet this programme is an undergraduate course leading supposedly to a generic physiotherapist, LASE can no longer promote itself as “LASE vision: an internationally recognizable and one of the leading sport higher education institutions in the Baltics, educating sport and health care specialists in sport, strengthening the academic, scientific and financial potential of LASE” (Latvian Academy of Sport Education DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY for 2015-2020).

Evaluation of the study programme "Physiotherapy"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Physiotherapy"

Short-term recommendations

1) It is necessary to formulate the objectives of the study programme in accordance with the aim of the programme.
2) The program should be revised and structured in such a way that according to the semesters courses are offered "from easy to difficult" and at the same time practical courses should be logically integrated with theoretical subjects.
3) To motivate first year students further, a system should be introduced whereby students can attend clinical sites on an observational basis from the first year of the course.
4) To further invest in the equipment and apparatus necessary to teach physiotherapy to a desirable standard within the Academy.
5) To implement simulation based learning that would elevate the competencies of students in the error safe environment.
6) To acquire more recent books and journals related to Physiotherapy.
7) LASE management should organise studies in English and attract foreign students, thus putting existing strengths in use and profiting 8) The auditing for LASE needs to be more vigorous and transparent
8) To establish an evenly distributed transparent workload amongst the staff.

Long-term recommendations

1) Introduce in a more formal manner different teaching approaches that will involve more directed individual learning yet working in groups to solve a problem like Problem Based Learning for example.
2) The Study Programme should be converted into a spiral curriculum and amalgamated into appropriate modules.
3) To ensure that all Physiotherapy skills and techniques that are required to treat patients are taught within the Academy.
4) To build / convert Laboratories for the study programme to be taught within the LASE.

II - "Health care specialist in sport" ASSESSMENT

II - "Health care specialist in sport" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The inclusion of AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport in the study field Health Care is justified and follows from the aim of the given study programme, the learning outcomes to be achieved, the content of the programme and the degree to be awarded.

2.1.2. The AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport is planned as a full-time study programme with the implementation duration of two years and the amount of 80 Latvian credits (CP). The language of instruction – Latvian and English. The code of the study programme according to the classification of Latvian education – 45722, where the first part of the code 45 indicates that the type of the AMSP

Health care specialist in sport is an academic master's study programme and the digits of the second part of the code 722 indicate that the thematic area of education is Health Care, but the group of educational programmes is Medical Services, which includes "Physiotherapy" (if the sixth and seventh digits of the code were specified for the study programme, then for Physiotherapy, without indicating the first two digits, the code would be 72204 (the Cabinet Regulations No. 322, approved in Riga on June 13, 2017. "Regulations on the Classification of the Latvian Education. Annex 4).
This means that the degree to be awarded cannot be – Master's degree of Health and Sports Science in Health Care; it can be – Master's degree of Health Sciences in Physiotherapy (lv: Veselības zinātņu maģistra grāds fizioterapijā).
Therefore, the third, fourth and fifth digits of the programme code could be "726", which correspond to the group of educational programmes Public Health. In this case, the most suitable options could be Master's degree of Health Sciences in public health (lv: Veselības zinātņu maģistra grāds sabiedrības veselībā) or Master's degree of Health Sciences in Health and Sports Science (lv: Veselības zinātņu maģistra grāds veselības un sporta zinātnē).
The degree to be awarded and the code of the AMSP Health care specialist in sport (45722) are not harmonised. If the LASE wishes to emphasise the Master's degree in health and sports science in the degree, then it would be necessary to change the code of the programme from 45722 to 45726.
The name, aim, and objectives of the study programme, comply with the requirements of the Cabinet Regulations No 240 "Regulations on the State Academic Education Standard" (approved 13.05.2014.), but it would be preferable to change the programme code and the degree to be obtained. The study results of the Master's study programme (SAR, p. 119) correspond to the 7th level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), which is described in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 322 "Regulations on the Classification of Education in Latvia" (June 13, 2017).
The admission requirements of the AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport – Bachelor's degree in Health Care and the qualification of physiotherapist or occupational therapist (language of instruction – Latvian) and Bachelor's degree in Health Care and the qualification of physiotherapist or occupational therapist, English level: B2 (language of instruction – English).
The name, aim, and objectives of the study programme comply with the requirements of the Cabinet Regulations No 240 "Regulations on the State Academic Education Standard" (approved 13.05.2014.), but should rather change the code to 45726 and the degree to Master's degree of Health Sciences in Health and Sports Science.
The duration and scope of the study programme implementation (including different options of the study programme implementation), as well as the language of implementation, are reasonable and justified.

2.1.3. The study programme submitted for the expert evaluation is the AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (45722), but at present the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (47722) is being implemented in LASE. The following changes have been introduced in the parameters of the programme as part of the study field evaluation procedure:
● after completing the Master's programme, the content of the professional qualification/study specialisation direction (sport physiotherapist or adapted physical activity specialist in rehabilitation) is not applied;
● In the academic Master's study programme Health Care Specialist in Sport (45722) two sub-programme modules have been developed to provide students with the opportunity to gain in-depth theoretical knowledge in the field of sports (SAR, p. 114) – physiotherapy or adapted physical activities and their research methodology.
The Professional Master's higher education programme "Health Care Specialist in Sport" (47722) is going to be changed to the Academic Master's higher education programme "Health Care Specialist in Sport" (45722) in order to promote the preparation of specialists in the field according to the

demands of the labour market and to develop cooperation with the Faculty of Rehabilitation of the Riga Stradiņš University and the Academic Master's higher education programme Rehabilitation implemented there. The transition to an academic education programme will facilitate the development of the inter-university Master's programme planned in the future (SAR, p. 115).
These changes introduced to the AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (45722) parameters within the assessment of the study field have been analysed, justified and shall be supported.

2.1.4. In the period 2017 – autumn of 2021, 37 students have graduated from the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport (code 47722). The places of employment have been identified for 27 graduates. Of these, 13 graduates or 46.4% are employed in the public sector, while 14 graduates (53.6%) work in the private sector. Four graduates (one of them a foreign student) work in other countries, such as Iceland, Austria, Belgium and Germany. The majority of the graduates work in their specialty in the field of health care. Among the graduates, there are several specialists who work as physiotherapists in the Super League Team of the BC "Ogre", HC "Rigas Dinamo" and the Latvian National Ice Hockey Team, in the Latvian National Volleyball Teams of U16 and U18 girls, as well as in the Latvia and Estonia Men's National Volleyball Teams. This can be considered a social investment in Latvian health care and the field of sports, which will increase the number of specialists who have obtained Master's degree of Health and Sports Science in Health Care.
The dynamics in the number of graduates of the PMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport in the period 2017–2021 is fluctuating (from 4 to 12 graduates in one academic year), but it does not fall below the number of 4 graduates per year (Appendix.3.1.4_1 Statistic date on Students.xlsx), which is partially acceptable for a master's study programme. Based on the LASE management's statement, the desired minimum number of students in a group would be at least 12 students. In the SAR it is stated that "obtaining a Master's degree also has a positive effect on the graduates themselves, first of all, it increases the demand for graduates in the labour market, as well as usually increases the amount of salary". The situation with the number of students and the labour market demand makes it possible to state that the PMSP "Care Specialist in Sport" is close to achieving its social and economic justification

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
The title, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements of the AMSP Health Care Specialist in Sport are interrelated, The duration and scope of the study programme implementation, as well as the language of implementation, are reasonable and justified. It would be preferable to change the code to 45726 and the degree to Master's degree of Health Sciences in Health and Sports Science.
The situation with the number of students and the labour market demand makes it possible to state that the PMSP "Care Specialist in Sport" is close to achieving its social and economic justification.
The expert group was supposed to review the existing masters programme, but instead was presented through the self-evaluation report with plans to transfer to an academic masters programme. The Expert group faced the dilemma that certain components of the master programme reviewed were related to the existing professional masters course (academic staff, students and graduates, study premises, feedback, course regulations), while the study programme plan and study course descriptions refer to a new academic masters programme which has not commenced. The Expert group recommends that the institution has to clarify this above situation both for regulatory purposes and for public reviewing purposes.

Strengths:
No strengths identified.

Weaknesses:
1. The degree to be awarded (the Master's degree in health and sports science) and the code of the AMSP Health care specialist in sport (45722) are not harmonized and does not comply with the requirements of the Cabinet Regulations No 240 "Regulations on the State Academic Education Standard" (approved 13.05.2014.).

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. According to the LASE self-assessment document "When developing or updating the description of study courses, teaching staff must consider the aims of the study programmes and the study results to be achieved. When defining the description of the study course and the study results to be achieved by the students, the study course must ensure that they promote the achievement of the results of the study programme. Teaching staff cooperate in the development of study results, content, description of independent work and evaluation of results". During the staff interview, it was mentioned that the content of study courses was updated in accordance with the LASE Guidelines for Developing and Updating Study Course Descriptions.
In order to determine whether the content of the courses is interconnected, corresponds to the objectives of the program and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes or not, an Experts Group revised the course descriptions.
However, it should be noted that there are many inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the documents, both technical and content (substantive). For example Appendix 3.2.1_3, in the "HEALTH CARE SPECIALIST IN SPORT" Plan, we see that the total number of credits for the second semester is 14, although the total number is 12 credits, as there two courses which are interchangeable according to the instruction language (particularly, 2-credit course, which is Basic course in Latvian (for the English flow) and the other Scientific vocabulary in a foreign language in the field of health care in sport (for the Latvian flow), i.e. the student receives one of these two, not both). Therefore, the total credits are not exact.
It should also be noted that the "Planned Study Results" of the course "Management in the Field of Health Care in Sport" is "Knowledge: - about sport, its importance, sports areas; - on the legal regulation of the sports industry in Latvia; - about the sports management system in Latvia; - about the national sports policy and its implementation mechanism.". One can come to a logical question - how does this knowledge help to manage the health care in sports if none of the health care aspects have been included in the study course outcomes.
There are still occasions when study outcomes in the course description are vaguely defined, the outcome description has not been tied to any well accepted taxonomy (i.e. Bloom's taxonomy or SOLO taxonomy). For example, in the study course "Sports Science (Theory and practice)" (Appendix 3.2.1._4. Descriptions) the study outcomes are defined as follows "Provide the physiotherapy professionals an in-depth understanding about the physical condition of certain direction (strength, speed, agility, strength, ductility) biological characteristics, the role of sports training of general and specific task realisation, in theory, to learn different patterns of training load-making, implementation principles, their application and planning training annual cycle for different sports." In this case the teacher centred approach has been used, describing what should be given to the students. Keeping this type of approach to study outcome setting not only impedes students from uptaking active role through assessing their own study results, but makes work for academic staff more complicated as it is much more difficult to organise student evaluation according to vaguely defined study outcomes. Instead the study outcomes should be stated as a well defined level of skill - exactly what a student should be able to do after finishing a particular study course

(from describing to creating).

If the academy has the ambition to prepare internationally competitive specialists (masters), it is necessary to be familiar with the international experience of sports management and the existing basic regulations. Therefore, it is necessary that these topics should be included in the course content.
The content of the course "Pharmacological Agents in Sport and Doping Control" completely requires revision. Course Goal, Course Tasks, Planned Study Results, Course Content does not respond to the title of the course and the content of the Master's program at all, it should also be noted that pharmacology is studied with very old books V.Lāriņš "Sporta farmakologija", Rīga, 1999. 2. I.Purviņš , S.Purviņa "Praktskā farmakologija ZIC", 2002.
The "Sports Science" course description lists 23 topics (Contact lessons), but the course calendar does not provide information on how they are distributed.
The 6th topic in the course "Movement Physiology and Motor Control" is "Nutrition and sports", while the program includes a separate training course "Nutritional Physiology and Hygiene", where the topic of nutrition is discussed in detail. Therefore, when creating courses and discussing the content of the entire program, lecturers should be involved together and teamwork should be ongoing. This eliminates subject overlap and duplication of topics in the program.
The purpose of the course "Medical Care of Athletes with Disabilities" is "To provide the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills for athletes with disabilities for the application of physiotherapeutic and medical methods in sports practice", however the Study Course Content provided in the description does not serve this purpose and it is necessary to modify.
Old books are indicated in the course descriptions. Therefore, it will be difficult to reach the expected results of the course and the results of the program in general with the presented literature. Graduates will be uncompetitive in the labour market with the knowledge gained. For example, the mandatory literature specified for the course "Movement Physiology and Motor Control" is very old, and accordingly, the statement "A study course that ensures the acquisition of the latest achievements in the theory and practice of the industry" cannot be valid. Also the course "Innovative Technologies and Functional Diagnostics in Sport", where we find books 1. Lāriņš V. Sporta medicīna. Rīga: LSPA, 2004.- 100 lpp. 2. Auliks I. Sporta medicina. Rīga: Zvaigzne. 1985.
It is advisable to replace the books indicated in the courses "Sports Science", "Scientific Research in the Field of Health Care, Scientific Research Structure" with new editions.
At the time of assessment there is still an internship as a part of the study programme. In the opinion of the Expert group, internship could be used as a research skill training in Academic masters studies. In that case there is a strong need for another Regulation of practice for masters studies, because the existing regulations (Appendixes Practice regulations and Practice regulations_2) does not match the objectives of academic education - they are almost exact copies of the ones made for professional masters programmes. The only difference is the title and the credit points. These regulations provide circumstances for training clinical skills but not academic ones.
During the meeting with the Academic Staff a level of discontentment with the lack of time and finance to carry out research was expressed. The Staff also suggested that there ought to be more exchange with foreign Universities especially those within the Baltic States to inject and bounce academic ideas and research.

2.2.2. The awarding of the degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science, but the academy has chosen a low benchmark (e.g. lack of knowledge in legal regulation of the sports industry at international level, as well as sports management systems and international sports policy and its implementation mechanisms), which makes the graduate uncompetitive on the international labour market and forced to fill the gap of knowledge and skills themself and make a

career on his own, this is confirmed by interviews with graduates. Additionally, the proposed academic masters study programme relies heavily on the foundations of the outgoing professional masters study programme, and doesn`t show significant shift towards teaching profound research competencies as one would expect in an academic masters.

2.2.3. The teaching methods described in the descriptions need to be revised by the academic staff. For example, in the calendar of the course "Dynamic Anatomy and Biomechanics in Sport" it is written that the topic of the lecture is "Analysis of motion biomechanics, stereotype and kinematic chains" and its "Lesson type" is a test that lasts 4 hours. Also, “lesson themes” 9, 15 and 21 of the course "Movement Physiology and Motor Control" are "Presentations and discussions", and 10, 16, 22 are "test", which is unclear. The lesson type of all of them is "L" (lecture), which is also illogical. This situation is confusing and it is necessary for the Quality Assurance Department to find such inaccuracies and take appropriate measures. Also, when drawing up course descriptions (goals, tasks, topics, results, and selecting teaching methods), more attention is needed from the academic staff. Therefore, the academy should constantly take care of staff training and development (teaching and assessment methods training, qualification-raising courses abroad, etc.).
In order to successfully achieve the results of the program, the academy should use modern learning and assessment methods: problem based learning, case based learning, using virtual reality technology, Peer-Coaching, Project-based learning, Portfolio, Log-Book and others. Student-centred learning and teaching principles should be followed.
It was noted that, despite previous recommendations, such a learning method as individual reflection is rarely used by academic staff to promote student learning. During the interviews students and graduates struggled to remember instances when they had been asked to reflect upon their learning activities. Respondents kept on referring to study course quality evaluation surveys they had been asked to participate in after each study course. Without active reflection about one's own learning experience it is almost impossible for students to master the highest levels of any skill. Consequentially without exercising modern and evidence based teaching methods it is not possible to reach strategic goals set in LASE development strategy. As it has been indicated previously in this joint opinion, a lack of common teaching methodology development strategy in LASE hinders the necessary progress.

2.2.4. An internship is foreseen during the study programme, that complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments and regulated according to 2 main documents approved at the LASE Senate (REGULATIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF THE ACADEMIC MASTER’S HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME „HEALTH CARE SPECIALIST IN SPORT” (45722) STUDY SUB-PROGRAMME ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SPECIALIST IN REHABILITATION and REGULATIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF THE ACADEMIC MASTER’S HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME „HEALTH CARE SPECIALIST IN SPORT” (45722) STUDY SUB-PROGRAMME SPORTS PHYSIOTHERAPIST). In both documents in paragraph 5.1. it is written that "in accordance with the study plan at the Practice places/organisation in the amount of 10 CP".
According to the regulations the Practice takes place in various organisations and at the Latvian Academy of Sport Education. The place/organisation and specifics of the Practice are determined by the LASE Practice Supervisor in coordination with the administration of the respective institution. However, in the self-assessment, LASE notes that the student can freely choose practice places closer to the place of residence and outside the practice sites offered by the higher education institution. The tasks of the internship are related to the learning outcomes and aims are achievable.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. The programme is concluded with state examinations, which include the development and defence of a Master's Thesis, which is evaluated by the State Examination Commission. State

examinations are taking place, as well as state examination commissions are formed in accordance with separate regulations.
According to Appendix 3.2.6_.1 “Topics of Final Papers” (i.e. “Associations between health risks and health behaviours in relation to excessive screen time in adolescents with and without disabilities”, “The self – massage with foam roller influence to the blood lactate concentration for a cyclists after high intensity of cycling load test” and “Fundamental movement skills and daily physical activities for children with development disorder (7-16 years old)”) , the topics are relevant to the field and correspond to the professional study programme. There are no master theses written in the academic masters study programme yet.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
The most study courses planned at the academic masters study programme should lead to necessary study results, however in too many cases poor quality course descriptions, inconsistencies between course content and study programme outcomes and unacceptable library resources will leave a significant impact on the study quality. The academy has kept the clinical internship from the professional masters programme without appropriate adaptation to the context of academic masters programme.
While due to the research laboratory there is a potential for significant scientific achievements in the upcoming academic master programme, thus awarding graduates with appropriate scientific degrees, the existing study programme is heavily clinical competencies oriented thus casting doubts on true accomplishments.
The academy too relies on a traditional teaching approach, the provided lectures and seminars about didactics to academic staff does not transfer the proposals to real life situations. Master study students should be trained in a completely different study environment - more reflective, student centred. Keeping on the old habits significantly reduces the competitiveness of the graduates.
While there are no final theses written in the academic masters study programme yet, the ones from professional masters study programme fits the study programme objectives and are relevant to the healthcare field.

Strengths:
1. The student has the choice of the desired direction to follow and is not limited to his choice thus being capable to shape his future education.

Weakness:
1. Lack of actual course description reviewing processes.
2. Lack of unified teaching methodology development strategy.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

As the programme suffers from a lack of internationalisation, sharing of information on international achievements, and the program refers to outdated literature and guidelines, it is difficult to assess the achievement of results in line with the expected standard. The amount of poor quality study course descriptions, the lack of evidence of student centred learning and limited amount of training in research keeps the study programme from being graded as fully

compliant to P5.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

To maintain consistency with the previous course the analysis for this section will be done in the same manner, however since as quoted in the SAR the necessary informative material and technical resources are similar to the physiotherapy programme then the analysis for both courses are very similar (Experts Report Pages 78-83).
2.3.1. To ensure and achieve the learning outcomes and to try and achieve high quality education for the Health Care Specialist in Sport a number of resources are necessary. These have been broken down by the Expert Group into:
HUMAN RESOURCES / STAFF
The Self Assessment Document regarding the Masters in Health Care Specialist in Sport in section 3.3.1 states that the necessary informative and technical resources have been provided for the need of the study programme. The Expert group partially agrees with this statement especially regarding the research facilities. It has been indicated that a merger with Rigas Stradins university is planned in the near future. The Experts Group lacks information of what happens during this accreditation period which can influence the Human Resources available or required, to service this merger leading to the Academic Masters. An academic masters will require staff who are more academically oriented, publish regularly and must be up to date with the knowledge that they must deliver, apart from this the staff have to be fluent in English if this course is to be offered in the English language. Unless LASE has done their homework diligently this merger can either be of benefit to the academic staff or unfortunately a lot of staff will find themselves in a difficult position.
The management are going to have to review their workload distribution with greater scrutiny. Staff working on an Academic Masters are expected to publish regularly, the English saying " publish or perish" is very pertinent at this stage. To publish, means you have to have the time to do your research, yet during the meetings with the staff the commonest complaint from them was that due to their heavy lecture loads they have no or very little time to do research.
Presently the degree being offered at LASE is a Professional Master higher education programme that is anticipated to be changed to an Academic Masters in the near future, together with the collaboration of Riga Stradins University. The Expert group looks favourably on this decision as it is intended to improve the standard of education, a statement told to the Expert group by the Management of LASE. It is also intended to alter the study programme from 50% theory and 50% practical course to a 70% theory and 30% practical component. However, the Board has not understood the reasoning behind a period of a practical component in an Academic Masters. The justification why a period of affiliation/ clinical practice is being included in the new Academic Masters has not been explained and justified. Hence, the resources both in Academic Staff, Clinical Supervisors / Clinical Educators, equipment and apparatus cannot be quantified, until a final decision whether this period will actually be included or not into the proposed Masters course.The SAR does not give an indication whether the increased theory will be taught at LASE or at Riga Stradins University. However, this change in course structure is also expected to be more attractive to future applicants and hopefully will attract more students thus providing more financial income(interview with the Director of Study Field).

LIBRARY:
The Library unfortunately does not have the resources necessary to provide the informative provision for the implementation of a modern Academic Masters degree in Health Care. The absence of modern books, the minimal number of books in English (the most common language for Health Research) and the lack of journals has been noted by the Group of Experts. Investment in the Library

unfortunately has to be tackled quickly, a new resource centre without the appropriate literature in book and journal form cannot stimulate the research or give the depth required and necessary at undergraduate or at Masters studies. The Expert Group takes a very adamant stand about this situation.

TEACHING EQUIPMENT and APPARATUS:

The Expert Group complements LASE for the Moodle platform and the ease with which it is delivered but also recommends further development of Moodle in that some lectures can be recorded and placed on the platform, more interactive free online learning courses and online assessment that students can try out to assess their level of knowledge about a subject can also be linked to Moodle.

The Expert Group is hesitant to agree with the SAR regarding the Physiotherapist and Masters qualification study programmes regarding research and teaching resources. The research resources available to the Teaching Staff, Researchers and Students have been significantly improved with the opening of the new Research Centre. This together with the new apparatus and equipment and research staff augurs well for a higher level of education for the Masters course. This can also help to encourage further students to commence their Doctorate studies there.

However as has been stated previously even though it has been noted that some new educational aids and some small physiotherapy apparatus have been purchased, both the quantity and quality are not enough to cater for Undergraduate and Masters programmes, of specific note is the total absence of any electrotherapeutic apparatus vital for the treatment of most musculoskeletal injuries especially sports injuries. The small apparatus shown to the Expert Group is definitely not enough to cater for the practical components of these courses.

The Expert Group is also concerned about the lack of teaching and learning resources available to help the staff to motivate the students to make learning easier and more enjoyable. They vary from a replica of the apparatus that they will have to be using in a hospital, to sophisticated physiotherapy apparatus Laser for example, to models, interactive sites and eventually a good library. This sites is being provided to show what is meant by the teaching resources available for the teaching of physiotherapy at both undergraduate and Masters level (https://www.apta.org/for-educators/curriculum-resources)(https://teachmephysio.com/) It is not comprehensive but gives the reviewer an indication.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. This section is being included under Financial and not under the next section about Teaching Staff, as financial implications are being put forward. The management of LASE has to become more self-critical and objective regarding staff recruitment. Presently according to the Management, the Masters course requires a minimum of 12 students to be cost effective and breakeven, however, presently there are 10 students in total following this professional Masters course, with the APA component only having 3 students. The amount of Teaching Staff to students in educational terms is extremely high. There are more staff than there are students this ought to be reviewed (page 140, 142, SAR). This course presently does not have ‘the minimum number of students to ensure the profitability of the study programme’.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions

The Experts Group notes the new investment in the Research Centre together with all the new apparatus that will encourage more research both by the Staff as well as the students. It is being recommended that LASE advertises this new Centre and exposes this feature maximally, that can be a feature to help future recruitment.

The Teaching Staff together with the Research Staff must be viewed as the strongest asset LASE can offer as a resource for the implementation of this course. However, further investment in teaching aids and the further use of online teaching can help raise the standard of education and attract more overseas students. However, the staff contribution must be recognised by the management and acknowledged either financially or in kind.
The Academy has to recognise that running a course with such a small intake and such high overheads makes it financially not viable. The amalgamation with Riga Stradins University might attract further students however LASE is going to have to work hard to market this course locally and overseas.
To help motivate students to learn, understand, participate and eventually be able to transfer this knowledge learnt in a teaching environment to a real patient with varying pathologies teachers will be better equipped if they have actual models, electronic simulation, posters, apparatus and equipment, recordings, IT question and answer etc. This lack of teaching resources puts students attending this course at a disadvantage compared to students who are in a well equipped teaching laboratory. The literature is quite clear that a student cannot maintain a high level of concentration for more than 20 minutes, thus teachers without the necessary resources are far stretched to deliver a course at Level 7 and maintain the students attention.

Strengths:
1. The Expert Group recognises and complements the LASE on the new Research Centre.
2. The Teaching staff must be deemed as LASE's greatest asset.

Weaknesses:
1. The lack of resources, mainly teaching space, teaching aids, very poorly equipped teaching laboratories, lack of therapeutic equipment, the inadequacy to be able to teach in a foreign language (English), the fact that teaching of treatment skills is done not within the Academy, the uncertainty how the merger with another University will influence what they are to teach; all these factors must certainly influence the teaching staff and must be cited as one of the main weakness of LASE in general and this course.
2. The lack of modern books and journals in the library.
3. The Masters course has not attracted enough students to make this present course economically viable.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The lack of appropriate teaching resources, and the lack of a good library, the uncertainty of the quality of Teaching and Learning taking place during the 50% of Clinical Practice justifies a partially compliant grade.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. According to SAR (3.4.1.) the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the LASE Academic Master's higher education programme "Health Care Specialist in Sport" (45722) are highly

educated, with professional work experience in the fields of health care, sports science and pedagogy, including doctors, certified physiotherapists, taking into account the specifics of the field. Practising professionals serving the national teams and Olympic athletes are also involved. The teaching staff regularly increase their professional competencies (both as specialists and as tutors), and improve their knowledge, for example, by participating in continuing education seminars organised by, for instance, the Latvian Association of Physiotherapists, the Latvian Sports Medicine Association, etc. The teaching staff participate not only in Latvian, but also in European and global seminars and scientific conferences in order to gain new theoretical knowledge and practical skills related to the current trends of the industry in the field of health care in sport. In the Academic Master's higher education programme "Health Care Specialist in Sport", the study process and practice are provided by teaching staff whose scientific and professional qualification meets the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.
From the 2016/2017 academic year to the 2021/2022 academic year, 45 teaching staff have been involved in the implementation of the study process of the Professional Master's higher education programme "Health Care Specialist in Sport" (47722), of which 5 (11.10%) were professors, 3 (6.67%) – associate professors, 1 (2.22%) – assistant professor, 1 (2.22%) – lecturer, 1 (2.22%) – assistant, 2 (4.44%) – leading researchers, 1 (2.22%) – researcher. Furthermore, 27 guest tutors were recruited for the acquisition of separate study courses, and 22 practice base methodologists were recruited for the provision of the professional practice – certified physiotherapists, sport or rehabilitation doctors, medical doctors. In this academic year, 12 tutors from LASE staff and 13 guest tutors confirmed their participation in the study process.
It has to be noticed that mobility of academic staff regarding teaching competency training through the Erasmus+ or other means is extremely low. None of the academic staff the Expert group met for an interview, both elected and invited, had used Erasmus+ mobility opportunities to develop their educators competency during the past five years.
Some of the academic staff are shown to still be in the process of obtaining a B2 level of English language skills leading to risks of them not being able to teach their students in the English language.

2.4.2. According to the SAR (3.4.2.) The Academic Master's higher education programme "Health Care Specialist in Sport" (45722) is staffed by elected teaching staff and guest teaching staff. Every year there are small changes in the composition of the teaching staff as the number of elected staff changes (usually ±1-2 tutors per year; some are re-elected or choose not to participated in the elections), as well as the guest tutors (depending on whether the previously conducted study courses continue to be read by the elected staff, whether new tutors are needed, how many students are there, how many practice places are there, etc.; in general, ±2 tutors change per year). In general, there have been changes in the composition of guest lecturers from the 2017/2018 to the 2020/2021 academic year, around 23 tutors. This is related to the provision of professional practice for all students in the specific medical institutions and the low proportion of students studying the programme in English, as well as to the participation of guest tutors in certain parts of study courses in the specified academic years (tutors from foreign countries). It should be noted that there is a marked dynamic among practice base methodologists, as the number of practice places increases every year not only in Riga, but in all regions of Latvia (for example, Ventspils, Liepāja, Valmiera, Rēzekne, etc.). The teaching staff has a significant impact on the quality of studies, therefore guest tutors are also recruited, who are able to give students professional advice, evidence-based information and contemporary events in research.
In the 2022/2023 academic year, 12 tutors from LASE staff and 13 guest tutors were invited and confirmed their participation to ensure the study process.
Changes in the number and composition of the teaching staff are an inevitable process, as the study process is dynamic, adaptable to the situation in the country, modern requirements in the field of

education, etc., but at the moment there are no objective (complaints, a drop in the assessment level of state examinations, etc.) or any other reason to think that the dynamics of tutors would negatively affect the study process. In order to ensure a high-quality and up-to-date, progressive study process, both experienced and young tutors with appropriate skills, knowledge and a good reputation are recruited.
At the same time one should note that the representative of the Association of Latvian Physiotherapists has indicated that it is challenging to cooperate with LASE due to the high staff change over.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. The Expert Group is recommending that since the new Academic Masters will have a 30% Clinical/Practical component that LASE becomes more transparent about this feature and gives evidence of reasoning behind this change, the location of its implementation and providing more details about who will be the supervisors of these Masters students
According to the Appendixes 2.4.4.2., 2.4.4.1 and after reading CV's of the academical staff , Experts group has concluded that that all of the elected academical staff (13) has published in the last 6 years, however some of the publications are of limited international recognition. Out of 45 people involved in implementation of the study programme, 30 have published in the last 6 years, 13 of those, that have not been published, have sufficient practical experience of at least 5 years to participate as educators in professional higher education. Some members of staff have to be mentioned as they have neither publications nor the experience. There are 3 members of staff who appear not to have published any work recently or not at all, and do not have the necessary practical experience of five years. 1 has the 5 year work experience, but, despite having reached a significant level of excellence in their professional career, do not have the appropriate level of education to work as an academic staff in an Academic master study programme.

2.4.5. According SAR (2.4.5.) In order to ensure a high-quality study process and achieve the goals of the programme, it is important to ensure the successive and dynamic delivery of the study material, so that it is easier for students to build a set of knowledge, skills and competencies. That is why it is very important to provide opportunities for teaching staff to communicate with both students and the administration, as well as with each other.
High-quality mutual communication between tutors helps to solve all unclear questions in due time, as well as to adjust the study content and improve the study processes, and what is no less important, to increase the satisfaction with the work done and to increase the students' satisfaction with their studies. The Department of Health Care regularly holds department meetings, where the elected LASE staff meet and can discuss topics related to programme implementation and the material and technical base, and receive feedback on ongoing lectures and classes, etc. Separate sessions have been held where guest tutors are invited, so that they can fully participate in the work process at LASE. All tutors have been informed and invited to address any questions and suggestions to the programme director or the head of the study direction. Starting this year, it is planned to hold joint meetings for the tutors of the programme to discuss the study process (especially the succession, dynamics and interconnectivity of study courses, teaching forms), results and opportunities for their improvement, as well as individual discussions with the tutors of each study course (if there are two or more, then all tutors involved in providing the study course) to present the results of the student questionnaire and to plan the study plan for the next year.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions
Teaching staff of LASE have the necessary qualifications by the regulatory enactments. They seem to be highly motivated to provide the best education possible.
The extremely high Staff to Student ratio can be viewed as a strength to this course but also as a weakness due to a lack of expected results achieved, attracting student applicants and as a financial burden.
Not all the academic staff will be able to continue their work as educators when the master's programme will switch from a professional to an academic. The requirements for educators to work in the new academic masters programmes will require a higher and broader academic record but unfortunately, make some excellent clinical professionals unsuitable for the position.
While the changes in academic staff in recent years are not miniscule, it seems they have a small impact on implementation of the study process. The academy so far has managed to recruit successfully. At the same time, LASE management should work on developing and implementing strategy to eliminate the changes in staff as more resources must be invested in training the staff to comply with all the requirements of high quality academic education.
While a lot of academic staff publish their research, it lacks the international impact as the publications are made in low impact sources. LASE should establish mechanisms to promote publications in at least moderate impact peer reviewed journals.
The existing academic staff are compliant with the professional masters programme, but the Expert group had difficulty reviewing the academic and clinical competencies of the staff to comply with the academic masters programme.
Not all of the academic staff has obtained the necessary English language skill level.
While there are mechanisms for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme, the low quality of information technology infrastructure, the limited time invited staff spends on LASE affairs due to financial incentive and limited time elected staff has due to teaching load, the effectiveness of the cooperation is questionable.

Strengths:
1. Teaching staff of LASE have promising qualification to implement academic masters study programme.

Weaknesses:
1. Only a limited number of scientific work by LASE academic staff is being published in high impact scientific journals.
2. Not everyone of LASE academic staff can verify necessary English language skill level.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Over 90% of the academic staff complies with regulations and requirements to teach students in Professional Master studies, however the scientific publishing output of most of the staff is at low level, thus imposing risk of insufficient research competence. Some academic staff are still learning English (their language skill level is unknown) or lower than B2, thus casting doubt over their abilities to implement the study programme in English.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The degree to be awarded (the Master's degree in health and sports science) and the code of the AMSP Health care specialist in sport (45722) are not harmonized and does not comply with the requirements of the Cabinet Regulations No 240 "Regulations on the State Academic Education Standard" (approved 13.05.2014.)

2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The LASE has provided the descriptions of the study courses in Latvian (Annex 3.2.1_4_Studiju kursu apraksti.docx) and English (Appendix.3.2.1._4_Descriptions.docx) languages. The course descriptions are fully compliant with the requirements set forth in Section 561, Paragraph 2 and Section 562, Paragraph 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.
Most study courses planned at the academic master's study programme should lead to necessary study results, however, in too many cases poor quality course descriptions, inconsistencies between course content and study programme outcomes and unacceptable library resources will leave a significant impact on the study quality.

4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma and its supplement (AIC coordinator added annexes. Appendix_3.2.1_1._Diploma supplement_Master.docx) is issued for completing the study programme in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 202 of 16.04.2013 "Procedures for Issuing State-Recognized Higher Education Certificates"

5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The elected academic personnel involved in the study programme (AMSP "Health Care Specialist in Sport") have a degree corresponding to the requirements set out in the Law on Higher Education and
comply with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (AIC coordinator added annexes. Apliecinājums 55 pants_EN.docx). However, It must be stated that presently a number of visiting staff do not have a master's

degree and since in the future this course will become an Academic Masters then a minimum master's degree is necessary, and in order to add prestige to the present course, it is being stated that all staff be encouraged to further their level of education.

6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The LASE has provided the Confirmation of the Head of the study field (AIC coordinator added annexes. Apliecinājums par valsts valodas zināšanām_ENG.docx) attesting that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations regarding the extent of knowledge of the official language and the procedures for examining the proficiency in the official language for the performance of professional duties and duties of office.

9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The LASE has provided the Annex (AIC coordinator added annexes. 2.3.7_2.pielikums_Pamatinformācija par docētajiem_magistrs.xlsx) that provides the information about the lecturers' proficiency in the English language. The appendix shows that not all lecturers have at least a B2 level of English
However, the LASE has not provided the Confirmation of the Head of the study field attesting that the teaching staff to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least a B2-level English proficiency.

10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement is fully compliant with Section 46, Paragraph 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet Regulations No.70 as of 23.01.2007 "Mandatory

regulations to be included in the study agreement" (Appendix_2.1.4._1.pielikums_Standart_Contract_EN.docx).

11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

In case the implementation of the study programme is terminated, the LASE will provide students of the AMSP "Health Care Specialist in Sport" (45722) with opportunities to continue their education in the LASE PMSP "Sport Science" (47813) (Appendix_2.1.3._2_EN_2.docx). Partially compliant, because the degree to be obtained after completing the PMSP Sports science, namely, Professional Master's degree in Sports Science is not the same as a Master's degree in Health Care.

12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The LASE guarantees compensation for losses to the students of the Academic Master's study programme "Health Care Specialist in Sport" (45722) if the study programme is not accredited due to actions of the LASE or if the licence of the study programme is revoked and the student does not want to continue education in another study programme (Appendix_2.1.3._2_EN_2.docx).

13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

N/A

Assessment of the requirement [8]

1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The AMSP "Health Care Specialist in Sport" (45722) mostly comply with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments, however, experts found some inconsistencies (more information above, under point 3, 5, 9, 11), which LASE should eliminate in order to ensure full compliance of the program with the requirements contained in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths

and weaknesses of the study programme

The major strengths as stated in the analysis of this study programme must be the Staff and the new Research Centre that is well equipped.
The major weaknesses are not limited to this study programme but are endemic to the study field of Health Care. These must be the lack of resources, mainly financial, that influence the teaching and learning. There has to be an investment in the apparatus and equipment necessary to achieve the aim of producing a modern professional who is effective and efficient as a Health Care Specialist in Sport. The Library requires a large investment in new books and journals. The teaching style has to become more diverse especially if we are expecting the students to become lifelong learners who definitely use IT as a means of furthering their education.
LASE will be merging this present Professional Masters with Riga Stradins University and converting it into an Academic Masters, but the SAR, the Management and the Course Director all mentioned that it will include a Clinical/practical component, the inclusion of which has not been justified and is ambiguous to any future students.
The lack of attracting enough students to make this course viable has also been commented about by the Board. To run a Masters course for ten students out of which only 3 are following the APA path has to be justified.
Internationalisation and cooperation for staff and students has to be improved, associated with this, is the further teaching of the English Language especially to the staff if they are to attract overseas fee paying students.
The management at LASE is again being advised to take heed on the analysis of the study programme and act upon the recommendations given by the Expert group.

Evaluation of the study programme "Health care specialist in sport"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Health care specialist in sport"

Short-term recommendations

1) It would be preferable to change the code of the programme to 45726 and the degree to Master's degree of Health Sciences in Health and Sports Science.
2) Ensure that all academic staff involved in student training has acceptable English language skills by continuous training.
3) Make the programme financially viable.
4) Develop a strategy and action plan that actually works to support research by the academic staff - provide them with education on obtaining grants and carrying out research to be published internationally.
5) Revision of all study course descriptions must be made especially regarding the compliance of study objectives of the study course to the ones of the the study programme, regarding quality of the study course outcomes, regarding the literature used for learning study course subject.
6) If an internship is a part of the academic masters studies its objectives should comply with the ones of the study programme.

7) Modern student-centered teaching and assessment methods should be used in the implementation of the program
8) It is being recommended that the management of LASE are to invest seriously into the lack of teaching resources available to the staff as discussed in 2.3 if this course is to develop. It is being suggested and recommended that Private enterprise be involved to help generate more financial help. Sponsorship of equipment by the local importers, Major companies in the Riga district sponsoring the acquisition of new books for the library. Making the gymnasium available to the public (for a charge) to avail themselves of the facilities present. Getting the student association to write to the manufacturers to donate small physiotherapy equipment.
9) It is being recommended that LASE either through their ENPHE, ERWCPT or personal connections sends the Heads of Departments of the pertinent course programmes on Erasmus plus sponsored visits to a number of European Universities to actually see the facilities, teaching and learning resources, teaching methods and course programmes that most modern courses are using today. Should LASE really want to be competitive and try to attract the number of both foreign and local students to make these courses viable and attractive this is going to be necessary.
10) The present Library is not conducive to a Masters course. The specific recommendation reflects the concern by the Expert Board that this has to be updated, more books and actual journals made available, a reading room, only past theses of a high standard are to be displayed, more IT stations and the removal of all old books that are considered inadequate or antiquated to be removed.

Long-term recommendations

1) The Expert group is suggesting as a long term recommendation in order to increase the internationalisation, financial gain and overall prestige, a joint study programme at Masters level with other universities could be a target LASE might like to consider (each university offering a module in which they are specialised in).

III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

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Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Partially compliant	While there is a policy and regulations, the lack of qualitative quality criteria and indicators hampers the efficiency of the system. Despite having defined policies and procedures, inability to effectively implemented much needed changes (recommendations from various experts) indicates the flaws of the internal quality assurance system (see section 1.6 in the Study field assessment; see SWOT analysis in the LASE development strategy)
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Partially compliant	The academy has failed to use the full potential of its resources (the laboratory, the academic and research staff, Science division, International liaison department) due to lack of appropriate policies and regulations. The existing policies and regulations are not delivering the expected outcomes, they should be revised.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Partially compliant	Cooperation within the Latvian state has improved and bearing fruit however this cannot be stated about cooperation on all local and international levels. The Board of the Latvian Association of Physiotherapists has stated that communication with LASE was particularly difficult. The grading reflects the analysis of this section.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Partially compliant	Following the previous review the basic recommendations have been adhered to, while the major recommendations: Teaching Resources, Internationalisation, the Library and the Study Programme have had either very little or no evidence of action at all.

Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Physiotherapy (42722)	Not relevant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Average
2	Health care specialist in sport (45722)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Average

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

There were no dissenting opinions amongst the group of experts, this report is being sent by mutual agreement of all following consent by all.